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FROM THE LAND OF PRINCES

FROM THE LAND OF PRINCES

BY

GABRIELLE FESTING

WITH A PREFACE BY

SIR GEORGE BIRDWOOD, M.D., K.C.I.E., C.S.I.

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"If any part of a land strewn with dead men's bones have a special claim to distinction, Rajputana, as the cockpit of India, stands first. . . . The tangled tale of force, fraud, cunning, desperate love and more desperate revenge, crime worthy of demons, and virtues fit for gods, may be found, by all who care to look, in the book of the man who loved the Rajputs and gave a life's labours in their behalf."—R. KIPLING, *Letters of Marque.*

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TO

E. R. F.

R. A. G. F. AND J. E. G. F.

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ERRATA

Page xxiii., line 10, *for* "Rama with Axe," *read* "Rama with the Axe"

,, xxvii., ,, 13, *insert bracket after* (Takas.

,, xxix., ,, 19, *for* "Baluhistan," *read* "Baluchistan"

,, xlvi., ,, 16, *for* "Akbar," *read* "Baber."

,, lii., ,, 18, *for* "while," *read* "where."

,, lx., ,, 12, *for* "lalies," *read* "allies."

,, lxxiii., ,, 4 *from end, for* "Cooke," *read* "Crooke."

PREFACE

BONDUCA. Give more incense,
The gods grow deaf and drowsy.
. . . . . .
. . . . . .
CARATACH. His hidden meaning dwells in our endeavours.
Our valours are our best gods. Cheer the soldier,
And let him eat.

JOHN FLETCHER, *BONDUCA*.

MISS GABRIELLE FESTING was happily inspired in determining to dare and do for the stirring national traditions and dynastic chronicles of Rajasthan, "the land of Kings," the Hellas of India, what Charles Kingsley and the Rev. Alfred J. Church have done for the tales, from Homer, and Hesiod, and Herodotus, of the gods and heroes of ancient Greece.

These bardic legends, or *rashas* as they are termed by the Rajputs or "sons of Kings" themselves, were first systematically gathered together for English readers by James Tod; who going out to Calcutta at the impressionable age of seventeen, after serving in the intelligence department of the army during the operations undertaken by Lord Hastings in 1817 against the Pindharis, was appointed in 1818 political resident at Udaipur, the

capital, in succession to Chitor, "the Painted," of Mewar, "the Mid-ward"[1] of Rajasthan.

The Hindus hold the *maharana* of Udaipur to be sacrosanct above all other Rajputs, as the reputed descendant, in the direct line of primogeniture, of the eponymous hero of the *Ramayana*, and the recognised head of the Solar Rajputs: who, with the Lunar Rajputs or descendants of the akin Kaurava and Pandava princes, the antagonistic heroes of the *Mahabarata*, constitute the *kshatriya* or "sovereign" caste, the second after the *brahman* or "priestly" caste, of the three sections (the third being the *vaishya* caste of "settled" traders) into which the primitive Aryan invaders of India, under the operation of the natural influences systematised by the Code of Manu, and similar law-books of the Hindus, gradually became separated; the fourth Brahmanical caste of *sudras*, or "afflicted" serfs, representing the subjugated aborigines,[2] or, at least, the pre-Aryan people of the country.

[1] The Hindus designate the whole country between the valley of the Indus and the valley of the Jamna and Ganges, and between the Himalaya and the Vindhya mountains, *Madhya-desa*, the "Middle-land"; the Mahrattas apply the term to the country between the Konkans and Khandesh; while all Hindus refer to the cradle of their race in Central Asia as *Madya-bhumi*, "the Middle-Earth." The Sikhs similarly name the land round about Lahor, as the original home of their sect, *Manja*, the local form of the Sanskrit *madhya*; this word over all India meaning the land between any village and the boundaries of the conterminous village lands, "the hub of the universe" for each village. "Media" is probably the same word.

[2] The word used in the *Mahabharata* and the *Rig Veda* for the people the Vedic Aryas found in India is *daysu*, the equivalent of the Hindustani *deshi*, *i.e.* "of the country"; but *daysu* includes brown

Seventy miles westward of Udaipur, at the angle formed by the northward emergence of the Aravulli Hills from the Vindhya Mountains, towers, to the height of 5650 feet above the level of the sea, the abrupt dome of Mount Abu, famous for its Jaina temples, terrace upon terrace, of white marble, sculptured "outside and inside, both pillars and roofs," with the finish and refinement of carved ivory or ebony, an ecstasy of the art of mystical architecture. This cone, the *guru-sikhar* or "Saints' Sanctuary" (literally "pinnacle") of the Jains, is the culminating point of the Aravulli Hills; "the Strong Refuge"[1] of the Rajputs, when overwhelmed in the flood of the successive Mahometan invasions of India from the VIIIth to the XVIIIth centuries A.D., and again when driven by outrageous oppressions they revolted against the Afghans and "the Great Mo(n)guls." From Mount Abu the Aravulli Hills range boldly north-eastward, straight as an arrow, through the midst of Rajputana, "the land of Princes," for about two hundred miles; when they begin to fall from their pre-eminence, and become more and more disconnected; cropping up, before they

Hamites and yellow Turanians, as well as possible autochthons of the ...groid colour of the Andamanese. The Sanskrit word for caste is ..., literally colour; and caste in its origin was the colour line ... white and brown, and white and yellow, and white and black; ... shades of these mixed colours, the Sanskrit word for the ... Brahmanical sub-castes being simply *varna-sankara*, ...xture," "colour-confusion."

...aks," "Stockade."

finally disappear in the alluvium of the valley of the Jamna, in the historic Ridge at Delhi, 360 miles north-east of Udaipur. As now restricted to the states lying between the Indus and the Jamna, a little less than one-half of Rajasthan—that is, Marwar (Jodhpur), Jeisalmir, Bikanir, and Sirohi, watered only in Marwar and Sirohi by the "Salt" Luni, as it flows southward to the Rann or salt "Waste" of Cutch—lies to the westward of the Aravullis; and a little less than one-half—Mewar (Udaipur), Amber (Jaipur), Kota and Bundi (Haraoti), &c., watered by the many affluents of the Chambal as it flows north-eastward to the Jamna—lies to the eastward of them. The twin British province of Ajmir, "Ajas Hill," and Mairwarra,[1] "the Highland-ward," extends over the middle third of their crest; the city of Ajmir, dominated by Taraghar, "the Star-garth," 2855 feet above the level of the sea, marking the point whence the Aravulli Hills begin to decline steadily toward Delhi. Situated on the verge of the Tropic of Cancer, Rajputana falls within the northern solstitial zone; the desert tracts of Persia, Syria, Arabia, the Sahara of North Africa, and the *Tierra Caliente* of Mexico, marking other, so to say, broken links of this the earth's close clinging girdle of fire and famine. Where not an absolute desert, as in [illegible] Thul, *i.e.* the *maru-sthali*, or "deadly regio[illegible] tween the Luni and the Indus, and parts o[illegible] i.e. *maru-vara*, "the Death-ward," "the [illegible]

[1] Compare "Mount"-Meru.

Rajputana is still an arid, and, for the most part, sterile land; but relieved, within the early and late shadows of the Aravullis, and along the banks of the Luni, and more frequently, and continuously, and in greater breadth in the courses of the Chambal and its tributaries, by green tracts of wild woodlands and herbage, cultivated fields, orchards, and pleasant gardens; and further diversified by the mediæval walled towns, uprising on the long rock-crested ridges of sand rippled over the wide, extended plains, like so many islands from the ocean, or huge turreted ironclads riding grimly on a rolling sea. Vast herds of camels and horned cattle, and innumerable flocks of sheep, in search of new pastures, freely wander everywhere; and behind all is the more or less distant background of the Aravulli Hills, with their shimmering peaks of rose-coloured quartz. These various features of the prospect, with its contrasts so strangely accented by the dry glitter of the tropical midday, embalmed and harmonised in the softer amber light of morning, or suffused with the refreshing rosy flush of evening, are transfigured to a tranced fairyland. In a moment the soul is brought face to face with, as it were, the soul of the soil, and its foster-children, their history, and their autochthonous gods; and the impression thus suddenly created by the fleeting scene, abides for ever with the spell-bound beholder.

At Udaipur young James Tod was fascinated by everything around and about him: by the spiritualising picturesqueness of the landscapes;

the gay colouring of the palatine cities; the white and green of the painted houses, the rose madders and reds, and lemon and saffron yellows, and cobalt blues of the nodding turbans, swaying girdles, and twinkling shoes, of the white-robed people in the streets, and the vermilion, and Chinese yellow, and bright indigo of the flags of all the gods fluttering among the green trees in every air of heaven that breathes about the temple spires; and by the spacious palaces of the Rajput princes, the stately splendour of their military courts, and their own manly, gallant bearing, and "civility of manners, arts, and arms, and long renown." Beyond all else, he was moved by their old feudal fortresses, and the shrines and temples of the Jainas, instinctively adapted as they are to the sentiment of the country and its inhabitants, and their chivalresque history. Seen day after day in sunshine and shadow, and month after month in all the glamour of the full moons of India, and sketched and painted over and over again by him, it was the aerial architecture of the visionary summits and peaks of the Aravulli Hills that, to the subjective sensibility of James Tod, touched Rajputana with supreme enchantment. With an industry, assiduity, and perseverance only enthusiasm, like his, and fed like his on "the corn of heaven," could so strenuously have sustained, he devoted whatever leisure he could obtain from his pressing official duties during the years 1818–22 in Rajputana, to the study of the physical geography, ethnography, and history of the country; and of

the social, political, and religious system under which it had been governed by the Rajput princes; and to the collection of their genealogies and family legends and traditions, as these are found epitomised and embodied in his "Annals and Antiquities of Rajast'han, or the Central and Western Rajput States," published by Messrs. Smith, Elder, and Co., in 1829–34. This work is an inexhaustible storehouse of the known and accessible information of the Rajputs, and of Rajasthan, as limited by the modern official circle of Rajputana;[1] and although in the present day its author's conclusions on certain moot points of obscure ethnology and obscurer philology may be questioned, it remains the standard history, and will always remain the classical history of Rajasthan. One is simply amazed how its author could have amassed the materials for its production, and reduced them from chaos to the fair and lucid order in which they are found in his pages, within the years of his transient life, for he died, as Colonel Tod, in 1835, at the age of fifty-three.

But the work is contained in two bulky volumes, imperial 8vo, has long been out of print, and is rarely to be found in the catalogues of the sales of second-hand books. Moreover, it is of too solid and preoccupying reading for the present day of

[1] The familiar Rajput designation of Rajputana is Rajwara; *vara* here not being used in the sense of "ward" exactly, or of "heaven" (compare pan-orama), or even of property (compare Trolsworthy, &c.), but rather of "warren," with the significance of "our own endeared home land."

professorial culture and superficial knowledge; while the fact that throughout the two volumes Tod assumes that his readers know as much of India, outside Rajputana, as himself, militates against the usefulness of the work to any but serious and studious readers. It is "caviare to the general," and outside public libraries is now to be found only in the houses of families who have inherited copies from relatives connected with the late Honourable East India Company, shelved beside the "Oriental Memoirs" of James Forbes, the grandfather of Montalembert; the "History of the Mahrattas" of James Grant Duff; and the "Ras Mala" of Alexander Kinloch Forbes.

Miss Festing would therefore have been more than justified in preparing her delightful collection of stories, "From the Land of Princes," if only it loyally served, as it does, to attract wider attention to a work of such rare originality and authority as Tod's "Annals and Antiquities of Rajast'han," a true "Open Sesame" to the heart and mind, the sympathies and aspirations, of the great historical ruling caste of India. But Miss Festing's handy volume has its own perfectly independent value, and in the very qualification of affording a clear insight into the real character and the ideals of the Rajput princes that renders Tod's unwieldy volumes invaluable to those who would acquire a knowledge, with true understanding, of the people of India. It is not a collection of numberless disconnected stories, taken at haphazard, to be palmed

off on children at Christmastide, an increasing evil of the modern publisher's trade, as distinguished from his art. Miss Festing's stories are indeed pre-eminently of the kind suited for boys and girls, as well as children of a larger growth ; but they are also historical documents, selected with careful discrimination, and reproduced, in Miss Festing's own appreciative and effective language, at full length, and in the diligently observed order of their proper chronology and topography ; and in the things that are profitable for inspiration and example, and therefore alone essential to historical teaching, they are faithful transcripts in prose of the *rashas*, or bardic annals, relating to the sovereign families of Mewar, Marwar, Amber (Jaipur), Haraoti (Bundi and Kotah), and Jeisalmir. Miss Festing's book should therefore have a beneficial influence, the highest praise that could be given to it, in promoting in this country a more intimate knowledge, and more intelligent understanding, of India, and in arousing in her readers of the age most susceptible to generous and romantic suggestions, a feeling of true comradeship with the noble *kshatriya* caste of Rajputs, and of radical brotherhood with the "twice born" castes of the Hindus generally, Brahman, and Rajput, and *vaishya*, who in blood and bone, and in their ineradicable instincts, are one and the same Aryan people with ourselves. The very word which labels our ethnical unity with them has been taken out of their own mouths, and in its original form

and sense: and among the earliest derivatives from it are the Sanskrit and Old Persian words signifying "truthful" and "brave" (compare the Greek War God, Ares), "noble" (compare the Greek *aristos*), and "friendly."

The Aryas of the prime, as they descended on India from the "officina gentium," some vague where about the Euxine, Caspian, and Aral seas, the "seething pot, and the face thereof toward the north" of the perfervid vision of the prophet Jeremiah, may have been mixed of all the ethnical stocks, Caucasian and Scythian,[1] of Central Asia; but without doubt they were predominantly of the Caucasian (Noachian) stock (Aryan or Japhetic) speaking the language from which Zend and Sanskrit, Greek and the Gothic languages, Latin and the Romance languages, have been derived. As they pushed farther eastward across Hindustan and, later, southward down into the Deccan, "they set up every one his throne by the way," subjugating to themselves the Caucasian Hamites, and the Turanian (yellow Scythians) and Nigritian people already in the country. And as their paramount position was thus consolidated, two things happened. They were no longer an army on the march, fighting at every step of their ad-

[1] The Scyths of classical writers were not unmixed Turanians, or "Yellow men." The "Royal Scyths" of Herodotus have many Aryan characteristics; and the Turks, and the Indian Mo(n)guls, can hardly be distinguished in their physical, emotional, and intellectual features from pure Aryas. The true "Yellow" and "Black" races are outside the Caucasian pale, and the genealogies of Noah.

vance. They had formed larger or smaller settlements, needing only a central garrison for their defence. Large numbers of the warriors thus fell out of occupation, and these turning their energies to trading, in the process of the centuries became the *vaisya* caste of Brahmanical India. It was a straightforward, frank solution of a pressing economic problem: but the development of the reproductive resources of a country, and of mercantile relations with contiguous countries, has ever had a humanising influence on men, and the initiation of this process of economic and social evolution by the unemployed Aryan warriors in India, proved the beginning, as in a grain of mustard seed, of the implacable and destructive conflicts that were to rage for centuries in a far-off future between the commercial and internationalised Buddhists and the priestly and narrowly national Brahmans, when as yet there were none of them. At the same time the Brahmans also began to fall out of the ranks of the fighting Aryas, but in a different manner. At first every Arya was a king and priest unto himself, his family, and his state. But now and again a poet of genius had appeared among them, chanting his own improvisations, to cheer his comrades on their ceaseless marchings and counter-marchings, or to rouse their courage on "the Field of Slaughter" to its highest fire. The "Hymns" of the *Rig Veda*, the original and only true *Veda*, are the lyric outburst of the devout joy of the Aryas, a transport of religious emotion that thrills the world to the present day,

when after their weary wanderings among the inhospitable uplands of Persia and Afghanistan, they at last stepped down into the immense extended, well-watered, and luxuriant semi-tropical plains of the Panjab. A special reverence was rendered to such gifted men, and was continued to their children, and children's children, as the keepers—locked up within their trained and specialised memories—of these psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs; now regarded as in themselves the ever-living words of God, and as arming their custodians with the prerogatives of actual divinity. The remaining fighting Aryas becoming more and more preoccupied with their administrative and military duties, whether as sovereign rulers or feudal vassals, the hereditary guardians of the *Vedas*, or sacred *rashas*, gradually monopolised the service of the priestly duties theretofore incumbent on every Arya to discharge personally, and thus became gradually segregated as the caste of Brahmans from the simultaneously differentiated castes of *kshatriyas* and *vaisyas*. The usurping Brahmans, in their sacerdotal intolerance of the natural supremacy of the Rajputs, sought to brand them with an artificial inferiority, not only by writing them down second in the order of their four theocratic castes, but by striving, and on the whole with remarkable success, to impose upon them all manner of ceremonial disabilities. This is already indicated in the *Aitariya Brahmanam*, an appendix to the *Rig Veda*, giving, for the guid-

ance of Brahmans, the earliest glosses on the sacrificial prayers of the *Veda*, with speculations on their origin, and explanations of their ritual. The English translation of this *brahmana* by Dr. Martin Haug was published by the Government of Bombay in 1863; and in Book VII. chaps. iii., iv., and v., and Book VIII. chaps. ii., iii., iv., and v., we have a clear insight into the means used by the Brahmans, as increase of appetite grew by what it fed on, to magnify their sacred office, and exalt themselves over the Rajputs, not only in the sphere of their spiritual life, but in the very domain of their inherent and indefeasible temporal authority and power. The story of Parasu Rama, "Rama of the Axe," who "cleared the earth twenty-one times," of the *kshatriyas*, and "gave the earth to the Brahmans," is another myth of the immemorial rivalry between the Brahmanical hierarchy and the *kshatriya* regal stratocracy.

The irresoluble hostility of the Brahmans toward the *kshatriyas* is shown also by the much later myth of the origin of the Agnikulas or "Fire(born)-family" of Rajputs. They are said to have been raised by the royal and saintly Agasthya, the reputed author of many of the "Hymns" of the *Rig Veda*, from a sacrificial fire kindled on the summit of Mount Abu, in the presence of a convocation of the whole college of Brahmanical gods. These Agnikulas are: the Paramaras, Pramaras, or Powars (Puars), *i.e.* "Premiers," of whom Chandragupta, the Sandracottus of the Greeks, and

the elusive Vikramiditya, the great champion of the Brahmans, are both claimed as members; the Pariharas, formerly of Marwar and Idar, but now found only in Central India and the Deccan; the Chalukyas, or Salunkis, of ancient Ayodhya (the modern Oudh), and mediæval Saurashtra and Maharashtra, who are now represented by the Bhagela Rajputs of Rewa, and the Jhala princes of Drandgra, Limri, and Wadwan in Kathiawar; and the Chauhans of Rajputana and Malwa, of whom Pritvi-raj of Delhi, Ajmir, and Lahor, the Paladin of the Rajputs in their earliest conflicts with the Mahometan invaders of India, is the most famous name, and who are at this day represented among the rulers in Rajputana by the Deoras of Sirohi and the Haras of Haraoti (Kotah and Bundi). The legend probably refers to an enlistment in the III[rd] or II[nd] century B.C. of Zoroastrian Persians, or pagan Greeks, into the *kshatriya* caste, as supporters of the Brahmans against the older recalcitrant *kshatriyas*: or it may be simply an allegory of the hallowing of the warrior caste by the fire of their lives of devoted self-sacrifice. According to the traditions of the Rajputs who claim to be descended from the *kshatriyas* of the primitive Aryas of India, these are still represented in Rajputana, in the Solar line, by the Grahilot, Gehelot, or Sesodia princes of Mewar (Udaipur), Dungarpur, Bansvara, and Shapura (the "Gohil" princes of Bhavnagar and Palitana, in Kathiawar, are of the same clan); the Kuchwaha (so called after Kush, the second son of Rama)

princes of Amber (Jaipur); and the Rathors (originally from Kanauj) of Marwar (Jodhpur), Kishengahr, and Bikanir; and, in the Lunar line, by the Bhatti princes (descended in the pedigree of the Yadavas or Jadons from Krishna, the *deus ex machinâ* of the *Mahabharata*) of Jeisalmir (and the Jadija or Jharija princes of Cutch, Gondal, and Morvi in Kathiawar). Nevertheless the Brahmans persist with the calumny that none of the original *kshatriyas* survived the massacres of "Rama with Axe," and that the Agnikulas are the only *kshatriyas* now existing in India. The contention is absurd. The Rajputs, who never lost their pride of Aryan race, never hesitated to recruit their ranks by the admission of desirable "aliens" from over the north-west frontier, whether Greeks, or Sassanian Persians. A Greek prince is traced in the genealogical list of the Rathors of Kanauj and Mewar; and in the Vth century A.D. one of his successors married the daughter of Barham Gaur (Varanes V.); and there is a tradition among the Gehelots of Mewar of an ancestress, in the VIth century A.D., who was the daughter of Naushirvan the Great (Chosroes I.), and the granddaughter of one of the Christian Cæsars of Byzantium. My own opinion, based on personal knowledge of the men themselves, is that, the purest Aryas of the present people of India are to be found among the Jainas, descendants of the Aryas who became *vaishyas*, and then, influenced by the tenets of Buddhism, formed themselves into the heterodox sect of Vaishnava

Hindus, named after the twenty-four "victorious" Jins, or deified saints, the objects of their especial worship. They form the prosperous and highly influential community of merchants and bankers known everywhere in Rajputana, Malwa, and Gujarat, by the style and title of *mahajuns;* and, although soiled with all ignoble use by the money-lenders who have made the name of *Marvari* a byword throughout India, the appellation means, and still upholds the ideals of, a "great gentry."

Apart from coins, and inscriptions on temple walls and similar structures, and a vast number of "copper-plates"[1] commemorating grants to temples, and the registers, ledgers, and similar papers accumulated in the current business of administration, the *chalta daftar* (literally "walking leathers," or "parchments," compare *diphthera* of the Greeks) Grant Duff used when writing the "History of the Mahrattas," the Hindus possess few authentic records, provided by themselves, of their own history; and in attempting to reconstruct it, we have to depend on the arbitrary references to past events to be found, generally mythologised out of all recognition of their real form, in the *Vedas*, *Puranas*, and other sacred scriptures, and in such secular romances as the *Prithviraj Chauhan Rasha* of Chand Bardai, the

[1] The scattered dates derived from these and other authentic sources have been recently collected into a volume, entitled "The Chronology of India," by C. Mabel Duff (Mrs. W. R. Rickmers). It calls for the most grateful acknowledgments of all students of Indian history.

heroical laureate of the last Hindu King of Delhi; the *Raja Tarangini* (with its continuations, the *Rajavali*, and others), the metrical annals, expanded over 4000 years, of the Rajas of Cashmere, in the Kaurava line of the Lunar *kshatriyas;* and the *Raja Taringini* of Amber, a similar list of the kings of Indraprashta, or Delhi, from Yudisthira, the eldest of the five Pandavas of the *Mahabharata*, to Vikramaditya of Ujjain and Delhi, composed so late as the early part of the XVIIIth century for Savai Jai Singh, the builder, all of white marble, of the beautiful city of Jaipur. Mere facts, even the obvious convenience of cardinal dates, are quite beyond the scope of history as understood by the Hindus; to whom its teachings, as apprehended and applied by themselves, would seem to have been all they have ever cared to heed; and wrested from the truth, and allegorised for doctrinal purposes as the actual events dealt with by them may be, this having been done with the sincerity of religious zeal, they have intuitively expressed their grateful sense of the dealings of Divine Providence with them as a favoured people, in devotional, epic, and ballad poetry; singing and making melody in their hearts to the high gods to whom they raise their soul-moving and animating strains of exaltation, and blessing, and glory in the highest.

The composite "Sesostris" (Seti I. and Ramses I., II., and III.) of the Greeks may have sent a naval expedition against India; and Darius Hystaspes certainly stretched his sceptre over the Panjab and

Sindh; but there is no definite date in Indian history before that, transmitted to us by the Greeks, of the crossing of the Indus, near Attock, in the midsummer of B.C. 326, by Alexander the Great; while the continuous history of India, the earlier chapters of which we owe to the Mahometan writers of Arabia and Persia, only begins with the momentous apparition of the conquering armies of Islam in Sindh, A.D. 711; at the very time (A.D. 713) that another Muslim army, under its one-eyed leader, Tarik ibn Zayad, was striding the Straits of Gibraltar, "the Hill of Tarik," into Spain.

The thousand (1037) years between the advent of the Greeks and that of the Mahometans in India is a period of intolerable confusion for the systematic historian, on account of this very want of the fixed dates needed to bring the salient, but fragmentary and disconnected, events of the period into their proper sequence or concurrence, and thus ascertain something of their reciprocal relations, and of their significance as factors influencing the future of India. But viewed in the light of the following millennium (1111) of the Mahometan terror in India, the conclusion is justifiable, that the period also was ennobled by the like dauntless and indomitable resistance of the *kshatriyas* to the Scyths, whether of the Turkman or Mongol races, who now began to pour ceaselessly into India, as in the after centuries they opposed to their Mahometan conquerors.

The shadows of the mighty names of the period are: Chandragupta (B.C. 316–292), variously described as a Lunar *kshatriya*, an Agnikula, and a *vrishala*, or *kshatriya* degraded to the status of a *sudra* "for neglecting the service of the sacred rites, and to consult Brahmans" (*Manu*, x. 43, 44), the "Sandracottus," who drove the Greeks out of the Panjab and Sindh, and married the daughter of Seleucus I.; his grandson Asoka (B.C. 260–220), the wilier Constantine of Buddhism; Kanishka, with the assigned date of B.C. 40, another patron of Buddhism, whose reign marks the culmination of the political ascendency of the Scyths (Takas, Hunas (Huns), Jats (Getæ, Goths), and Dhes (Dahæ), and others) in India; Vikramaditya, "the Blazing Sun"-of-Righteousness, the Melchizedek of the Hindus, surnamed Sakhari, "the Slayer of the Scyths"; and Salivahana (a Mahratta potter) of Paithan in Maharashtra, also surnamed Sakhari, from whom the Rajputs of Bezwara are descended. They are both held to have been contemporaries of Kanishka, and are both revered by the Brahmans as persecutors of the Buddhists, and the unresting, strenuous, and ever victorious assailants of the Scyths. Yet the Saka era, named in honour of Salihavahana, "the Slayer of the Scyths" (Saçæ), commences A.D. 78, and the Samvat era, established in honour of Vikramaditya, in B.C. 57; while the bloody battle of Korur, near Multan, in which the Scyths were finally brought down by Vikramaditya from their paramount poli-

tical position in India, is dated, by the expert chronologists of Europe, between A.D. 524 and 544. Of such are the bewildering entanglements, obstructing the symmetrical treatment of Indian history between the exit of the Greeks and the entrance into it of the Mahometans. The Brahmans utterly ignore the invasion of Alexander the Great, and we only know that they did at the time recognise the presence of the Greeks in India from their including in their list of *vaishalas* a people they call the *Yavanas* (compare Javan), by whom they undoubtedly indicate the Ionians, although this designation is found to include the Scyths, and the Mahometans of Hindustan; in short any *mlecha*, or white-faced "barbarian," from the north or west of India. In the form of Jonakan it is applied in Southern India to the Mophlas of Malabar.

Within four years of the death of The Prophet of God, A.D. 632, the Caliph Omar built Bassora, in order to control the course of the lucrative trade of India, Persia, and Arabia with Europe; and A.D. 647 the Caliph Othman sent a navy of ships from Bassora to reconnoitre the coasts of Western India, about Baroch (representing ancient Barygaza), the port of Saurashtra, and Tanna (in mediæval times representing ancient Kalyana, and itself represented in these modern days by Bombay), the great emporium of Maharashtra. But the Arabs, a Caucasian race, and highly intellectual people, who had with the keenest

alacrity and zest entered into the inheritance of all the wisdom of Greeks alike in the arts of war and peace, at once perceiving that before the rich prize of India could be grasped with any sane hope of its peaceful retention, Afghanistan, the Barbican or "Antemural" to the Bayley-yard of Hindustan, had to be permanently occupied, the Caliph Muawiah I., A.D. 664, equipped an enormous army for the subjugation of that country; a prescient, sagacious task, to the accomplishment of which fifty years of arduous and steadfast fighting were doggedly devoted; although in vain, for any advantage it was to bring to the already doomed Arabs. A detachment of the force was at the same time sent in charge of Mohalib to make a reconnaisance of the approaches into Sindh; and when the military and religious reduction of the Afghans was sufficiently advanced, the Caliph Walid I., after a survey of the coasts of Baluhistan, Mekran, and Sindh, A.D. 705, in 711, fitted out a naval expedition under the command of Muhammad ibn Kasim, acting in co-operation with Hijaj, the Governor of Bassora. Muhammad Kasim sailed boldly up the Indus to Bakkar (some say he landed at Deval, *i.e.* "the Temple" near the modern Karachi), and thence marched on Alor, and after a brief campaign annexed the whole of Sindh, from the delta of the Indus to Multan, to the Ommiad empire of Damascus. Dahir the Rajput Deshpati (="despot," *i.e.*, *desh*, "land," *pati*, "lord") of the country, made a heroical defence; but in every

implement of war he was hopelessly "outclassed" by the newly-gotten Greek science of the Arabs. There is presented to the eye all the picturesque pageantry of Agincourt as illuminated on the pages of Michael Drayton: the brave show, in the radiant sun, of lines on lines of glittering steel, and ruffled banners and fluttering banderolles of every "tincture," each with its own "armings," not one but—

"Something had pight that something should express;"

and gorgeous trappings and caparisons of horses and horsemen, and camelry, and towered elephants in their solid array; and as "the drums begin to yell," the sudden tumult and shoutings in the ranks, and the rushing clatter of hoofs, and the clash of arms at close quarters, and the confused battle swaying backwards and forwards, as

"The Trumpets sound the Charge and the Retreat
The bellowing Drum the March again doth beat:"

but it is not war; and with the setting of the sun, all that gay and gallant chivalry of Sindh is rolled in blood and dust, and the tragedy of Alor closed with burning and fuel of fire in the terrible and woful Rajput rite of *johur*. Dahir fell fighting in the thick of the Arab cavalry; but his widow continued the defence of the city until the failure of provisions for the garrison. Then the women and children gathered themselves together and built up a huge funeral pyre in the grounds of the

palace, and mounting it, were sacrificed in the flames of their own kindling: and the men, having bathed, and duly gone through the other ceremonials prescribed for the "office," sallied forth sword in hand against the enemy, and perished to a man. This is the immemorial Rajput ritual of the *johur*. After Sindh, Muhammad Kasim annexed Gujarat, and thence marched on into Mewar. When, according to the vague traditions of the Hindus, Valabhi, now Vala in Kathiawar, was, in the first quarter of the Christian era, stormed by a Persian king—Naushirvan the Great, 530–78, is the king named—the widow of the slain Rajput king, fleeing into the desert of Western Rajputana, there became the mother of a son, known as Prince Goha. He succeeded in establishing himself at Idar, and is said to have married a daughter of the Sassanian King Naushirvan, by a wife who is said to have been a daughter of one of the Emperors of Constantinople—Maurice, 582–602, being the Emperor named. The seventh from the posthumous Prince Goha was Prince Bappa, who on hearing that the Arabs had entered Mewar, collected a following and inflicted a crushing defeat on them; when he himself was raised to the *gadi* of Chitor; and it is from him that the reigning *ranas* of Udaipur are lineally descended. The Arabs in India never recovered from this blow; received at the very moment of their overthrow at the other extremity of their far-stretched empire by Charles Martel, on the glorious green

fields between Poictiers and Tours, A.D. 732. The Rajputs in Sindh rose successfully against them in 750; and on their attempting to re-enter India from Kabul, under the command of the Mahometan Governor of Afghanistan, a relative of the Abasside Caliph Harun al Rashid, the Rajputs went out to a man against them, and, led by Prince Khoman of Chitor, finally expelled them from the sacred soil of India, A.D. 812. The Arabs were, in fact, at this time paralysed at the very centre of their power by the suicidal struggle ending, A.D. 750, in the extinction of the Hellenised Ommiades (saving the few who escaped to Spain, and renewed at Cordova the splendours of the Saracenic art of Damascus), and by the transfer by the triumphant Abassides of the seat of the Caliphate to Baghdad, A.D. 763: a fatal error, for through it they lost touch with the stimulating West, and were brought completely under the debilitating and demoralising influences of the East, and were thus led on into abandoning the military defence of the Empire to mercenaries, until in the XIIIth century the "Caliphate of the East" found its dishonoured grave in "golden Baldac." For again the Scythians, now known as Turks and Mongols, issuing forth, first as free-lances, and then as ravening conquerors, from the frost-bound steppes and hills of ice of the uttermost north, the Uttara-Kuru of the Hindus, once more swept away the undermined fabric of Semitic civilisation in Anterior Asia, and of Aryan civilisation in India and Eastern Europe, as though

they had been but the glory of an hour. The Caucasian races have always rapidly spread themselves along the course, the "litus Aryanum," of the immemorial overland commerce between India, its perennial fountainhead, and Europe; and the great catastrophes of civilisation have resulted from the intersection of this line of human progress and culture by secular cataclysms of Negroes from Inner Africa into Hamitic Egypt, and of Turanians (in the phrasing of mediæval legends, the impure "Shut-up-Nations" of "Gog and Magog") from Posterior Asia into Semitic Anterior Asia, and Hamitic Egypt, and Aryan India, and Persia, and Europe; isolating Caucasian civilisation in separate compartments, from the Indus and Ganges to the Danube. And the pity of it is that these humanising nations have never since the time of Alexander the Great and Augustus Cæsar been again joined together in the same mind, and the same judgment, living in peace together, and armed with the omnipotence of their unity alike against the "Yellow Peril" and the "Black Peril." This is the unplotted tragedy of the Old World on which the curtain has never yet been rung down. Even now, "from the farthest inch of Asia," come the daily reports of a reopening of the secular conflict between "Iran and Turan," with a fury and overpowering impressiveness as of the rending of the seals of a new dispensation; whereof the far and wide reaching issues no man may presage.

The decline of the Arab Empire becomes manifest immediately after the death of the renowned Harun al Rashed, the contemporary and friend of Charlemagne, when one after another the provinces of the Eastern Caliphate began to throw off their allegiance to Bagdad. The Turkman, Ismail Samani, possessed himself of Transoxiana, Persia, and Afghanistan, setting up his throne at Bokhara. The fifth in descent from him appointed his favourite Turkman slave, Alptegin, Governor of Kandahar, where, on the death of his patron, he asserted his independence; leaving his kingdom on his own death, in 979, to his favourite Turkman slave, and son-in-law, Sabuktegin. Jaipal, the Rajput prince of Lahor, suspecting the designs of his minatory neighbour on Lahor and Cashmere, resolved to anticipate them by himself seizing on Afghanistan; but when face to face with Sabuktegin at Lagman, on the road from Peshawur to Kabul, not far from Badiabad, where Lady Macnaughten and Lady Sale were held captive in 1842, a sudden storm in the mountains caused a panic among his superstitious warriors, and reduced him to the humiliation of purchasing his retreat by the surrender of his elephants, and the promise to pay a pecuniary indemnity. On the sinister advice of his Brahman priests he deliberately broke his word of honour; when Sabuktegin in his turn marched on Lahor, and again coming upon Jaipal on the plain of Lagman, inflicted a disastrous defeat on him, notwith-

standing that his large army was swollen by contingents from the allied Rajput States of Delhi, Ajmir, Kalinjir, and Kanauj. The son of Sabuktegin, the fierce and avaricious bigot, Mahmud of Ghazni, maintained the quarrel of his father with Jaipal, and in 1001 defeated him with frightful slaughter in the Peshawur uplands; permitting him to return to Lahor only on the condition of paying an annual tribute to Ghazni. The disgrace of this was too bitter for the unfortunate prince, who, after agreeing to the terms imposed on him, solemnised his death in accordance with the Rajput "office" of *johur*. Mahmud's second expedition, A.D. 1004, was against the Prince of Bathia, the chief city of Bathiana, the land of the Bathi Rajputs, now included in the Pattiala State; and here also Prince Bijai Rai, when he found his courageous resistance vain, committed the imperative sacramental suicide of *johur*. Mahmud's fourth expedition, in 1008, was directed to the destruction of the powerful league formed against him by Anandpal, the son of Jaipal of Lahor, and supported with passionate patriotism by all the noble Rajput ladies of Hindustan. For forty days the rival hosts confronted one another on the wide pavilioned plain rising westward from Peshawur to the Khaibar Pass; and when the general action was brought on by an irresistible charge of Cashmerian highlanders, and Anandpal seemed to hold the winged victory in his outstretched hand, the elephant he rode

in his high estate took fright at the Greek fire used by the Mahometans, and the panic thus caused turned the tide of the battle in their favour; twenty thousand of the flower of the Rajput warriors being left dead on the field. Then, pillaging on the way the fabulously endowed shrines of Nagarkot, now Kangra, Mahmud returned to Ghazni to gloat at leisure over his opulent plunder of pearl and gold. His sixth expedition was undertaken for the sack of the yet holier and wealthier shrines of Sthaneshwara, "the Throne of God," famous in the legends of the *Mahabharata* and the *Puranas*. In his seventh and eighth expeditions, 1014 and 1015, he ravaged Cashmere. But still devoured by the greed of treasure easily won, he in 1017 undertook his ninth expedition into the very heart of Hindustan, creeping stealthily along the slopes of the Himalaya, as near to the river sources as possible, and suddenly presenting himself with 20,000 Afghan infantry and 100,000 Turkman cavalry before the joyous garden city of Kanauj. The Rajput prince at once capitulated; whereupon Mahmud, after three days' rest, hurried on to the great Brahmanical shrines of Muttra, the birthplace and sanctuary of Krishna, giving them up to fire and sword, and plunder and rapine, for twenty days, and sparing only the fabric of a few of the temples for their consummate architectural beauty. All of them were stripped of their rich decorations, and idols, and their untold stores of hoarded gold. His tenth and eleventh expeditions, of 1022 and 1023,

were of comparative unimportance. The former was successful in its punitive object, the deposition of Jaipal II. of Lahor, for endeavouring to incite a Rajput campaign against the Prince of Kanauj for his submission to Mahmud without an appeal to the fortune of war. The latter directed against the Rajput Prince of Kalinjir, for assistance given by his predecessor to Jaipal I. of Lahor against Sabuktegin, and by himself to Anandpal against Mahmud, proved unsuccessful. The twelfth, last, and locally most vividly remembered of Mahmud's Indian expeditions, was in 1024, when he trudged down a thousand miles to the sack of Somnath in Kathiawar. The Rajputs let him proceed on his outward march unmolested; but when he turned back, over-weighted with the votive offerings of centuries, his face anxiously set toward Ghazni, they dogged every turn of his flagging course through the desert wastes between the Luni and the Indus; leading him away on the right side and the left from the sparse water-springs, and betraying him into every manner of ambages and ambuscades, until well-nigh the whole of his army was lost, and the greater part of his impious booty. For the rest he bilked the poet Firdausi of his trivial pension; and in the very hour of his death (1028) wept on bidding farewell to his treasures of costly arms and armour and precious stones, sternly controlling an occasional impulse to divide them among the loyal comrades of his wars, and other faithful friends. But he had a quick and true eye for great archi-

tecture; and from a maze of squalid Turkman huts he made Ghazni, with its "Palace of Felicity," and arcaded streets, and fair fountains, and the mosque of "The Celestial Bride," the pride and boast of Central Asia. Therefore, after an emotion of amused surprise, one understands the fitness of things in the fact that he died, if not exactly in the show and seeming, yet, as regarded and judged by his contemporaries, in the full savour of sanctity. In a word, he was a man, and whatever he did, he did it right throughly.

The first Afghan dynasty, called of Ghazni, gave place, in the regular course of Afghan perfidy, treachery, and foul murders, to the second Afghan dynasty, called of Ghor, 1153–1206; and Shahabuddin, better known as Muhammad Ghori, on succeeding his uncle on the *masnad*, resolved on the conquest of India as a deliberate and definite policy. The moment was propitious to his designs. The Rathors of Kanauj had never been forgiven their ready submission to Mahmud of Ghazni; and Ananda Deva, the Tomara Prince of Delhi, dying without male issue, and leaving his kingdom to Prithvi Raja, the Chauhan Prince of Ajmir, the latter, now uniting in his person the Tomara and Chauhan Rajputs, and the sovereignties of Delhi and Ajmir, asserted his pretensions against the prescriptive claims of (his uncle?) Jaya Chandra, the Rathor Prince of Kanauj, to be recognised as the overlord, *primus inter pares*, of the reigning Rajputs of Hindustan. This was bitterly resented

by Jaya Chandra; who taking advantage of the approaching *svaiamvara* (literally and actually in primitive times, "own-choice" of a bridegroom, but degenerated in mediæval times to acquiescence in the choice of the parents), or marriage, of his daughter, summoned all the Rajput princes to be present on the occasion, and render him homage as their Lord Paramount. Prithvi Raja, who loved and was loved by his fair cousin, strong in his pride as in his affection, bluntly refused to demean himself as a vassal of Kanauj. Jaya Chandra, enraged, had an image of Prithvi Raja made, in the garb of a doorkeeper, and placed at the entrance to the hall in which the nuptials of his daughter were to be celebrated. But he counted without the fair Sangagota, who, on approaching the hall, bearing the garland she was to place round the neck of the bridegroom selected for her, as a symbol of his being "her own-choice," quietly turned to the right, and cast it over the affronting image of Prithvi Raja. In another moment Prithvi Raja himself was by her side, and before the brilliant assembly could recover from their amazement, had swung her up across his saddle bow and galloped off with her, fast as his horse could bear them, all down the rattling road to Delhi. It was Netherby Hall and Young Lochinvar anticipated, and Walter Scott was also there, as Chand Bardai,

[1] The poet Chand actually flourished at this date, and although his authorship of the *Prithviraj Chauhan Rasha* has latterly been called in question, no reason has been adduced for doubting the unanimous tradition of the Rajputs on the point.

to immortalise an incident so typical of the romantic and chivalresque life of the old Rajputs, "in Love and Armes delighting," in the "martiall *Pyrrhique* and the *Epique* straine" of the "Kanauj" *kandh* ("portion," Canto) of the *Prithviraj Chauhan Rasha*. Jaya Chandra sent his daughter her *jehaz*, or wedding trousseau, but on his son-in-law he called down the wrath of the Afghans from Lahor and Kabul. Muhammad Ghori had, in 1191, made an attempt on Delhi, when being promptly met by Prithvi Raja about thirty miles west of the city, at Sthaneshwara, the traditionary battlefield of the Kauravas and the Pandavas, he was there defeated. But having now, A.D. 1193, strongly recruited his Turkman cavalry, he at once called them to boot and saddle, and set off again for Delhi at the head of a fabulous force. Betrayed by Jaya Chandra, and deserted by the Bhagela Rajput Princes of Gujarat, yet supported by the Gehelot *rana* of Chitor, Prithvi Raja was able to muster 200,000 cavaliers, and a proportionate number of men-at-arms, to his colours. The two hosts came in sight of each other from the opposite banks of the river Sarasvati; Prithvi Raja having again selected his ground, "the Field of the Kuravas and Pandavas," at Sthaneshwara, for its auspiciousness among all Hindus, and its good omen for himself; covering the parched plain for miles upon miles with his tents, and painting the whole eastern horizon, until it seemed aflame, with his waving streamers, and ensigns, and pennons, and banners.

But the days passed by the Afghans in preparations for the battle, were wasted by the Rajputs, trusting to the charmed ground on which they lay, in sports and feasting; when one night, just before the dawn, Muhammad Ghori, crossing the Sarasvati, suddenly awoke the day with his drums and trumpets, and was upon the Rajput camp before his approach had been observed. Prithvi Raja, however, soon got his army well in hand, and was steadily pressing Muhammad Ghori to a second defeat, when the latter, feigning a general retreat, so soon as the unsuspecting Rajputs—true Aryans in this respect—were in the flagrant disorder of their reckless pursuit, charged them with the whole body of the hitherto masked elite of his cavalry, called up from the right and the left against the doomed Prithvi Raja. For miles the "stricken field" was bestrewn with castaway flags, and spears, and shields, and heaped bows, and jewelled swords, and plumed casques, and exquisitely chiselled and damascened gauntlets, greaves, and breastplates, and gaily dyed scarves, intermingled with the countless dead. Nor was it only the number of the dead that was so portentous of evil to come, but their position, their authority, and their worth. Prithvi Raja, fighting to the last, his sword still in his hand, refusing all surrender, although surrounded on all sides and virtually a prisoner, was cut down in cold blood. His young bride of yesterday immolated herself on his funeral pyre. The Prince of Chitor shared in his death; and with them also fell well nigh 150

of the purest and best bloods of all the Rajput nobility in India. It was the Flodden Field of Rajasthan, and for 600 years India never recovered from that stroke of doom: not until England stepped forward to revindicate her Aryan liberties from Turanian slavery and oppression. Storming Ajmir, and massacring its garrison, Muhammad Ghori, in 1194, passed on to Kanauj, which fell an easy prey to his arms, most of its defenders being driven into the Jamna, with the brave old Jaya Chandra at their head, fighting to the last. When recovered, his body could only be identified by his case of false teeth held together by gold wire; an ironical fact which has been strangely overlooked in the history of dental surgery.

In the dramatic contrasts of its opening and closing scenes, the victory at Sthaneshwara, the elopement of Prithvi Raja and Sangagota from Kanauj, the defeat at Sthaneshwara, and the young wife's bridal bed laid on the funeral pyre of her husband as the unpremeditated consummation of the revenge of Jaya Chandra, and the miserable old man's own redeeming end,—surely never was a tragedy, not even of the House of Atreus, of deeper and more moving woe. It is the story of Juliet and her Romeo, but involving in the pathetic fate of these Rajput lovers, the doom of a great mediæval Aryan empire, presenting Aryan civilisation and Aryan culture in a brighter, happier, because more natural and simple form than it had taken since the days of Alexander the Great, or will ever take again, for it was still Greek

in its outward form, as well as in its vitalising spirit. No wonder that the story inspired the heroical Chand Bardai to sing his undying requiem of the Rajput race. The scattered remnants of the reigning families retired through the defiles of the Jamna into the recesses of the Aravulli mountains, and the solitudes of the desert between the Luni and the Indus; Rao Sivaji, the grandson of Jaya Chandra, settling in Marwar, with his capital at Mandor.

The conquests of Gujarat, Oudh, Bengal, and Bahar followed, and by 1206, the date of Muhammad Ghori's assassination, the irregularly organised rule of the Afghan Mahometans extended over all Hindustan, *i.e.* India north of the Tapti and Nerbudda rivers, and the Satpura and Vindhya mountains.

On the death of Muhammad Ghori one of his favourite slaves seized on the government of Afghanistan, and another, his ablest general, Kutubuddin, on that of Hindustan, and founded the third Afghan dynasty of India, called of "Slave Kings," A.D. 1206–88, with their seat at Delhi; where the Kutab Minar commemorates his name. During the reign of his successor, Chinghiz Khan appeared on the Indus (1217), but got no farther into India. But his Mongols had seen the subtropical plains of India, and they repeated their visit in 1239–41, and again between 1246 and 1266; and during the latter period an embassy was sent to Mahmud II., the eighth of the Slave Kings of Delhi, by Hulaku Khan, the destroyer of Baghdad,

a grandson of Chinghiz Khan, and a brother of Kublai Khan, "in Xanadu." The only events of the period connected with Rajputana were the capture of the hill fort of Rintambor in 1231, and a rising of the princes against Balin, the ninth Slave King, A.D. 1266–88, said to have been quelled in an immense slaughter.

The fourth Afghan dynasty of India, styled "of the House of Khilji," was founded on two assassinations by the Khilji chieftain, Jelaluddin, in 1288. He was succeeded, after the murder of his two sons, by his nephew, Allauddin Khilji, whose reign is memorable for a great raid of the Mongols on Delhi, 1298; and for the commencement of the regular subjugation of the Deccan, both the Mahratta country and the Carnatic. Risings of the Rajputs were put down by the reduction of Gujarat, 1297, the capture of Jeisalmir in 1294, the recapture of Rintambor in 1300, and the siege and sack of Chitor, 1303–5. The Gehelot prince and his warriors, driven to despair, resorted to the awful rite of *johur*. His queen, Padmani, a woman of exquisite beauty, with all the ladies of the court, and the wives of the warriors, built up a vast funeral pyre in the very centre of the city, and so "passed as in a chariot of fire to the Heaven of Indra"; and all the men rushed out of the gates upon the besiegers, who cut down most of them on the spot, only a few escaping into the overshadowing Aravullis. This is "The First Sack of Chitor." With the poisoning of Jelaluddin by his favourite

slave, and great general, Malik Kafur, and the assassination of his third son and successor by his own favourite minister, a vile Parwari ("outcaste," compare Greek *paroikos*) Hindu pervert to Islam, the House of Khilji came to an end in 1321.

The fifth Afghan dynasty of India, styled "of the House of Tughlak," from its founder, Gheiazuddin Tughlak, Governor of the Panjab, the son of a Turkman slave by a Jat mother, reigned, in a succession of seven kings, from 1321 to 1412. The period is marked by the rebellion of the Mahometan governors of the provinces of the empire against the central authority established at Delhi, and by the terrifying advent of Timurlang(ra), "Timur-the-lame," "Great Tamburlaine," at Attock, 1st September 1398. He swept through Northern India in a whirlwind of devastation; and after being proclaimed Emperor of Delhi, and massacring 100,000 prisoners in cold blood in honour of the occasion, and going in state to the noble mosque of polished white marble on the banks of the Jamna "to render to the Divine Majesty his humble tribute of fervent praise for the signal success vouchsafed to him," he recrossed the Indus in March 1399, taking with him the pillage of Delhi, Mirut, and Hardwar, and an innumerable multitude of enslaved prisoners.

The sixth Afghan dynasty of "The Four Seiads" (1414–1450), ruled at Delhi as viceroys of the Mongols; and the seventh, of "The Three Kings of the House of Lodi" (1450–1526), was the last

Afghan dynasty of India. Altogether the Afghans had battened on India 320 years.

The Afghan Governor of Lahor, himself a Lodi, having revolted from Ibrahim Lodi, the last of his dynasty, called in the aid of Zahiruddin Muhammad, surnamed Babar, "Baber," "the Lion-Hearted," hereditary Khan of Kokhan. He was the sixth in descent from Timur, and on his mother's side a descendant also of Chinghiz Khan. Having occupied Kabul in 1504 and Kandahar in 1522, he readily responded to the invitation of Daulat Khan Lodi; his first act after crossing the Indus being to seize Lahor and depose its disloyal governor as an untrustworthy person to leave in command of his communications with Central Asia while on the march to Delhi. Akbar had only 20,000 men with him, but mostly Turkman cavalry; and when he found himself barred at Panipat by Ibrahim Lodi with an army of 100,000 —as the statement is—and 1000 elephants, he at once entrenched himself, masking his cavalry on both flanks. He let Ibrahim Lodi exhaust himself in repeated attempts to rush the position, and then, at the psychological moment, slipping his elite cavalry (of mounted bowmen) on the disordered Afghan host, and assailing them on the right hand and the left, struck down 5000 of them on the spot, with Ibrahim Lodi in their midst. The rest of the rout, recoiling before his solid assault like surging waves from a rock-bound shore, were rolled back in their headlong flight in a torrent

of bloodshed into the swift flowing, unheeding stream of the Jamna. In such wise, on the 19th of April 1526, was the second of the four historic battles of Panipat won and lost. The capture of Agra immediately followed. Henceforward throughout the rule of the Mo(n)gul Emperors (1526-1806, and nominally to 1857), the history of India passes into the open light of our own day, and need be no further traced here beyond its points of contact with the history of Rajasthan, as now contracted into Rajputana; and only for the simple service of threading together Miss Festing's separate narratives.

Neither the Afghans nor the Rajputs anticipated that Baber would remain in India after the plunder of Delhi and Agra. They expected that he would return, like Timur, with the groaning burden of his bag and baggage, into Central Asia. He had, however, fully resolved to govern India in India, and forthwith set about the suppression of the rebellious provincial governors of the Lodis, and the insurgent Rajputs, entrusting this arduous duty to his eldest son and successor, Humayun (1530–51). The Rajputs, when they saw that Baber had come to stay among them, rose to a man against him, in a last desperate effort to restore the *kshatriya* sovereignty throughout Hindustan. They were led by the Rana Sanga, the *kalas*, or "Pinnacle"-of-Glory, of Chitor, and the Rai of Jaipur, and the Roa of Jodhpur, and Medni Rai, a brave and enterprising Rajput cadet, who had

recently possessed himself of the fortress and territory of Chanderi in Malwa. This patriotic league was shattered at a blow in the battle of Sikri (afterwards called by the Mahometans Fatehpur Sikri, "the City of Victory"), February 1527. Shortly after this Bahadur, the Sultan of Gujarat, invaded Mewar, and stormed Chitor, 1532, "the second Sack of Chitor," when the noble Rajput queen, before celebrating the *johur*, sent her bracelet to Humayun, to pledge him, by this immemorial Rajput token of adopted brotherhood, to the protection of her son. He at once marched against Bahadur whom he drove back into Gujarat. Humayun was never free from troubles with the Afghans, and for fifteen years, 1540 to 1555–56, they were in almost complete possession of Mahometan India.

Jellaluddin, surnamed Akbar, "the Great," the son of Humayun, was throughout his reign (1556–1605) the contemporary of Queen Elizabeth (1558–1603). He, or rather his faithful guardian and great general, Beiram, stamped out the Afghans, now led by a great *kshatriya* general named Hemu, on the plain of Panipat, 5th November 1556, "the third Battle of Panipat"; and the following six years, 1567–73, were spent in the reduction of the again resurgent Rajputs. The first to submit was Bahara Mal of Amber (Jaipur), one of whose daughters had been taken (1561 ?) in marriage by Akbar, and the daughter of whose son and successor, Rai Bhagvandas, was married

(1585 ?) to Selim, the son and successor, under the name of Jehanghir ("the World-Conqueror"), of Akbar. Again, on the submission of Jodhpur in 1573, Rao Udai Sing gave up his sister Jodha Bai in marriage to Akbar. Raja Man Sing, the brave and ever-faithful general of Akbar, was a member of the reigning family of Jaipur; and another *kshatriya*, Todar Mal, distinguished as a general, was also a distinguished financier, and the greatest of Akbar's ministers. The Emperor's employment of the Hindus in high office and responsible military commands served greatly to reconcile them to Mahometan rule: his marriages with the Rajput princesses also undoubtedly improved the physical vigour and intellectual power of the family of "the Great Mo(n)guls," and tended to ameliorate the religious and social prejudices separating Mahometans from Hindus. But at the time, the Jodhpur and Jaipur royal families incurred much odium and contempt for permitting them. The Rana of Chitor resolutely refused to acquiesce in the degradation, and defied the high wrath of Akbar against his proud and scornful contumacy. He preferred death to what he deemed, and was deemed by all his peers to be, dishonour, and the foulest dishonour. Akbar accordingly laid siege to Chitor; when there being no hope of deliverance the *rani* solemnised the rite of *johur*. This is known as "the third Sack of Chitor, 1567–68." Udai Sing, the *rana*, on the approach of Akbar, leaving the defence of Chitor to Jai Mal, the chief of

Bednor, had sought refuge in the neighbouring forests, where he afterwards built the city of Udaipur; making a vow that, so long as Chitor remained a ruin, neither he nor his successors would twist their beards in the Rajput fashion, or eat from anything but leaves, or sleep on anything but straw; and to this day the *ranas* of Udaipur never twist their beards, and if they eat from gold and silver the dishes are placed on leaves, and if they sleep on a bed it is laid on straw.

By 1592 Akbar had made himself master of Hindustan, keeping a strong hold of Afghanistan as the key to the plains of the Indus and Ganges; and he now commenced operations for the recovery of the lost Deccan to Islam. But in 1601 his health seriously failed him, and the last five years of his life were overshadowed by his gloomy forebodings of the future. He knew that he was a man superior to all the men about him; that there was none to carry on his work; that there was not one who understood its significance. He died in absolute mental isolation. In truth he was not only the greatest of "the Great Mo(n)gols" of Delhi, but pre-eminent above all his pre-eminent contemporaries in Europe, and an ornament and pride not only of Islam, but of the human race. His transcendent name in India rests not so much on his conquests, as on his genius in consolidating them, and creating the organisation for their civil administration and military defence. He freely bestowed, or rather he enforced, religious tolera-

tion on his subjects, and could he have had his will of their hearts he would have broken down all social barriers between them. He advanced Hindus not only to the highest and most dignified, but to the most responsible and confidential, appointments in the State; and never should it be forgotten that they served him with scrupulous and whole-hearted fidelity, and that the loyalest of them were the strictest and most uncompromising devotees of their own religious beliefs and observances. He abolished the infamous poll tax on Hindus, forbade *sati* ("suttee"), and encouraged the remarriage of Hindu widows. He severely suppressed the attempts of the Rajputs to act independently in matters of high policy and state necessity; but so long as they were submissive in their political relations with the Paramount Power, he not only respected their social prejudices and sympathised with their misfortunes and aspirations, but treated them as valued and honoured and trusted friends; and he made the most advantageous use of them for the purposes of imperial defence; not attempting to dragoon them into uniformity with the Mo(n)gul drill-books, but leaving them in their own natural military formation, racy of the soil, as volunteer troops, who above all, horse and foot, were every one a gentleman, as it was with the Scots clansmen. He never interfered in any way in the internal economy of their sovereign states; and he never, in the benign intelligence of his

capacious brain, conceived the thought of imposing an alien system of education on a people who, through 2000 years of history, had elaborated the most perfect form of Aryan speech, and created a splendid literature and unique architectural and industrial arts, and a highly spiritualised ritualistic culture of their own. We may therefore the better understand the anguish of his dying years, 1601–1606: the daily failing of his great heart for fear, and for looking forward to the evils that he saw were coming on the Mo(n)gol Empire when his own fate was fulfilled. He was constantly speaking to his family and his great nobles of the evil consequences of their mutual jealousies and rivalries, and of the imminent dangers of persisting in them, and exhorting them to concord and frank co-operation. But they were as words spoken to the wind that bloweth while it listeth; while at this very time, February of 1601,

"Riding in *Thames*, between *Lymehouse* and *Blackwall*,"

were the *Hector*, *Ascension*, *Susan*, and *Guift*—with the *Red Dragon* off Woolwich—freighted with the "unshunable destiny" of the English race, "the British Raj" in India: those who turned a deaf ear to the warnings of Akbar little witting that they were thus already preparing the way before it.

In the reign of Jehanghir, 1605–27, the ever-smouldering disaffection of the Rajputs was, after a defeat suffered by the imperial troops in 1610, appeased for a time, on terms most advantageous

to the Rana of Mewar, Amara II., the grandson of Udai Sing. Shah Jehan, the third son of Jehanghir, owed his succession to the throne of Delhi, 1628–58, to the support given him by the Rajputs, who in his reign were equally powerful in the court and the camp of the Great Mo(n)gul. The year of his accession was also the year of the birth of Sivaji, the man of men destined to reanimate the Mahrattas with that Aryan passion for personal freedom and pride of race which, under unparalleled adversities, had sustained the Rajputs through eight hundred years of uncompromising hostility to the rule of the Arabian, Afghan, and Mo(n)gul Mahometans. The auspices seemed favourable to the future of India, India of the Hindus; but the Mahrattas were new to the responsibilities of power; while the Rajputs, in the course of their prolonged struggle for very existence with the Mahometans, had lost something of the foresight and sagacity of their once magnanimous statesmanship; and instead of uniting in a common policy toward the Mo(n)gul empire, these truly patriotic Hindu nationalities entered on a fratricidal contest for predominance at Delhi, with consequences that would have brought universal ruin on India but for the tardy and reluctant, but at last definitive interposition of the English in their internecine warfarings. Arungzib, "the Ornament of the Throne," otherwise known as Alumgir, "the Conqueror of the Universe," the cruel, perfidious, intolerant, and fanatical fourth son of Shah Jehan, secured the

succession to the throne by a series of the cruelest and most treacherous murders. Both Jeswant Rao of Jodhpur and Jai Sing of Udaipur had assisted him against Sivaji, but his reimposition of the poll-tax alienated the loyalty of the Rajput princes, and his vindictive treatment of the widow and children of Jeswant Sing drove them again into open revolt, and they were conciliated only by the remission of the obnoxious tax.

Under Bahadur Shah, otherwise Shah Alam I., 1707–12, the grandson of Arungzib, the Sikhs and the Mahrattas gave great trouble at Delhi; and on an alliance being formed between Rana Amira II. of Udaipur, Sivai Jai Sing of Jaipur, and Ajit Sing (son of Jeswant Sing) of Jodhpur, virtual independence was granted to Rajputana. For the support rendered at this crisis, and in the previous rebellion against the poll-tax, by Jaipur and Jodhpur to Udaipur, they had restored to their Houses the privilege of intermarriage with the House of Udaipur. Unfortunately, the concession revived the antipathies excited against the former families for having given their daughters in marriage to Akbar and Humayun, and greatly aggravated the rivalries among the Rajput princes for marriage with the high-born princesses of Udaipur; the tragical issue of one of these romantic feuds directly leading at length to the establishment, in 1817-18, of the British protectorate over Rajputana.

The eighth Mo(n)gul, 1712, a son of Shah Alam I., the ninth, 1712–19, and tenth and eleventh, 1719-20,

all grandsons of Shah Alam I., are empty names; but the ninth, Farukshir, is interesting because of his marriage, in 1715, with a daughter of Ajit Sing of Jodhpur. Muhammad Shah, the twelfth Mo(n)gul emperor, 1720–48, was entirely in the hands of the Mahrattas, to whom he granted the *chauth*, or "one-fourth" of the revenues of the Deccan. The Mahrattas, being called in by Jagat Sing II. of Udaipur to assist him in asserting the claims of his nephew to the vacant *gadi* of Jaipur, also received for this service the *chauth* of Mewar, and the cession of the district of Rampur. But the event of Muhammad Shah's reign was the invasion of Nadir Shah, 1738–39, with its climax in the bloody massacres at Delhi and the symbolical abduction of "the Peacock Throne" of Shah Jehan. In the last year of his reign India was invaded by one of Nadir Shah's lieutenants, in 1738–39, the terrible Ahmed Shah Abdalli. He was met and repulsed at Sirhind by Muhammad Shah's son and successor, Ahmed Shah, 1748–54. But the Abdalli was permitted to keep possession of the Panjab (Lahor and Multan) as a solatium for a check recognised as full of menace for the future of Delhi. Under Alamghir II., the fourteenth Mo(n)gul emperor, 1574–59, a brother of Muhammad Shah, the dreaded Abdalli, once more crossed the Indus (1756, the year of "the Black Hole"), and having seated his infant son in the government of the Panjab, marched on Delhi and entered the city the 11th of September 1757 (the year of Plassey). But pestilence breaking

out in his army he once more marched back to Kabul.

The nominal reign of Alamghir's son, Shah Alam II., was from 1761 to 1806. As soon as the Abdalli was out of sight, the wire-pullers at Delhi incited the Mahrattas to ravage the Panjab, and this most ill-advised, if brilliant, adventure again brought the Abdalli down upon Delhi. After many marchings and counter-marchings the Mahrattas were at last driven to bay, and entrenched themselves at Panipat, there to await the attack of the Abdalli. His force was less numerous than theirs; while careful therefore to watch them on every side, he resolved that they should wait until they were starving before he destroyed them. So at last, on the eve of the 6th of January 1761, Sivadasha Rao sent round the word :—"The cup is full to the last drop, and we must drink it to the dregs;" and at dawn on the following morning, driven by hunger, his whole camp moved out to the attack, 65,000 horse, 15,000 foot, 200 cannon, and 200,000 Pindharis, the Chunchuses of their day. The Sindhia was on the right, the Holkar and the Rajput auxiliaries in the centre, and the Western Mahrattas, from Sivaji's *svairaj* (*i.e.* "own-kingdom"), on the left. The latter brave *mavalis* ("dalesmen" of the Upper Ghats) drove back the Abdalli's right, and the Rajputs and Jats drove back his centre; and the fortune of war would have been with the Hindu army but that the Holkar at this moment treacherously abandoned the field, and was followed by the Rajputs.

"The fourth Battle of Panipat" then became the Armageddon of the Mahrattas. They lost everything on the fateful field save the honour of the Sahyadri *mavalis*.

The fight fought, and Delhi looted, the Abdalli returned to Kabul, where he died in 1773. At Delhi itself everything was left in confusion worse confounded than before, sometimes the Mahrattas securing possession of the person of the puppet emperor, and sometimes the Mahometans, each in turn wielding his still controlling sceptre for a season as Lords of Misrule. Rajputana suffered terribly during this chaos. In Mewar the Rana Jagat Sing (1733–51) had, as already stated, surrendered Rampura, and agreed to pay half *chouth* to the Mahrattas. In the reigns of Raj Sing (1754–61) and Arsi (1761–71) the State was constantly overrun by roving bands of these freebooters; and the Rana Amira II. (1771–7) was compelled to yield up several districts to the Sindhia and the Holkar of the period. But it was in the earlier part of Bhim Sing's long reign (1777–1828) that Mewar suffered most from the senseless and ruinous raids of the Mahrattas. Jaipur and Jodhpur were treated in the like manner; but the energetic Jaipur prince, Pratab Sing (1769–1803), in alliance with the Jodhpur prince, Vijaya Sing (1752–93), succeeded in inflicting condign chastisement on them at the battle of Tonga, 1787, when Vijaya Sing obtained possession of Ajmir after it had been held continuously from 1756

by the Mahrattas. It was inevitable that England would be drawn into the vortex; but the pressure of the Mahrattas was first felt by the Honourable East India Company chiefly in Southern India. The complications of the position were bewildering, but Warren Hastings was now at the head of affairs (1772, 1774–85), and at the right moment ordered Colonel Leslie to lead a force from Calcutta diagonally across the breadth of the peninsula upon Surat; and on his showing himself a little dilatory in his preparations for the march, replaced him in the command by Colonel Goddard; who, starting off in October 1778, reached Surat on the 6th of February 1779. This memorable feat of combined political sagacity and courage, and military skill and vigour, was denounced in England as "a frantic exploit." It has been well retorted that, "but for such heroic phrenzies, the English would never have been Lords Paramount of India." The triumphant result of the march was the Treaty of Salbai, 1782, regulating the future relations of England with the Mahrattas, and the Nizam, and Tippu Sahib. The prestige of the Mahrattas having been weakened by Goddard's success, and further injured in Hindustan by the victory of the Rajputs at Tonga, they lost for a time their influence at Delhi, and Shah Alam II. passed into the hands of the Mahometan faction of the Court. Suspecting that he had amassed great treasure, the Rohilla Golam Kadir, to induce him to reveal the place of its concealment,

put his sons (the second was Akbar II., the sixteenth Mo(n)gul, 1806–37) and grandsons (the son of Akbar II. was M. Bahadur, the seventeenth and last Mo(n)gul, 1837–57) to piteous tortures in the presence of the unhappy monarch; and this failing in its purpose, the fiendish Rohilla in his rage snatched the dagger from Shah Alam's girdle, and struck out both his eyes with it. The Mahrattas now regained their hold of the poor blind emperor, and began to cause trouble once more in Central and Southern India; thus bringing on a second Mahratta war in 1803. After Wellington's victory at Assaye, 23rd September 1803, and Lake's at Laswari, 1st November 1803, it was most satisfactorily concluded by the Treaty of Deogaom, 17th December 1803, with the Bhonsla, and of Sirji Argengaom, 30th December 1803, with the Sindhia: a marvellous year's work, due chiefly to the energy of the Marquis of Wellesley as Governor-General (1791–1805). Subsidiary treaties of protection were made with Jaipur, Jodhpur, and others of the Rajput States. These treaties were denounced at home as committing England to the virtual protectorate of India; and this disheartening the Rajputs, and encouraging the Holkar, who, owing to the vacillations caused by the action of the Home Government, had all along been left at large, he at once fell upon Rajputana, and thus brought on the third Mahratta war, April 1804 to December 1805.

Although the Holkar caused some trouble, Lord

Lake cut him up severely at Fatehghar. But the simultaneous delay in the siege of the Jat fortress of Bhurtpur encouraging the Sindhia to join the Holkar, a preposterous panic seized on the authorities at home, who in July 1805 sent out Lord Cornwallis to Calcutta with express instructions to restore "peace at any price." A separate peace, where there was no peace, was at once made with the Sindhia and the Holkar; and although both were absolutely in our power, the shameful and shameless price we paid for it was the sacrifice of all our faithful lalies in Rajputana to the unleashed vengeance of their hereditary foes. Mewar, still under Bhim Sing, 1777–1828, was scoured from end to end by the Sindhia and the Holkar; and the notorious Afghan adventurer, Amir Khan, the ancestor of the Nawabs of Tonk. The cities were destroyed, the forests burnt down, the fields laid waste, and the people driven into the fastnesses of the Aravulli and the Satpura hills and Vindhya mountains. Jaipur, under Jagat Sing II., 1803–18, was similarly devastated; and Marwar, where Man Sing's first act on ascending the *gadi* (1803) was to assent to the repudiation of the treaty of protection we had entered into with his predecessor *in articulo mortis*, was subjected to the same malignant fate. But the most abject and the basest betrayal of all, was that of the little Rajput state of Bundi. When the British forces, under Colonel Monson, were retreating before the Holkar (8th July to 31st August 1804) they at length reached Bundi, where Umed Sing,

disregarding the reprisals of Holkar, gave them a most cordial reception, and rendered them every possible assistance, and conducted them in safety through his kingdom, out of all pressing danger; thus fulfilling to the letter, and in the frankest spirit, the obligations of the treaty we had forced upon him in 1803. Yet, and in spite of Lord Lake's protestations, we left him absolutely defenceless to the ruthless vindictiveness of the Holkar; for the government in London had given their panic-stricken orders, and the abdominous and slouchy general who surrendered New York, and made the inconclusive treaty of 1792 with Tippu Sahib, good slogging fighter though he was, had not the stuff in him to turn, winking, upon the cowardice of the home authorities with an accomplished fact overmastering all remonstrance or reproof.

Further serious aggravation of the troubles, created by the policy initiated through Lord Cornwallis, were stayed by his providential death; and when the Earl of Minto went out as Governor-general, 1807–13, the fatal consequences of our truckling to the Mahrattas were so obvious that the exercise of the greatest discretion and caution was required on the part of the government of India, if order and peace were to be maintained in the country.

Then occurred the strange quarrel between Jaipur and Jodhpur for the hand of Kishna Kumari Bai, the young daughter of the Rana Bhim Sing, 1777–1828, of Udaipur. She had been betrothed to Bhim

Sing, 1793–1803, of Jodhpur, and on his death was claimed by his successor Man Sing, on the plea that her betrothal was to the throne of Jodhpur and not to the person in passing occupation of it. Her father, however, had already betrothed her to Jagat Sing, 1803–18, the effeminate and debauched prince of Jaipur. The beautiful Kumari Bai, born in 1792, was barely twelve years of age at this time, and for the next seven years Rajputana was convulsed by the rivalry of Jaipur and Jodhpur for her innocent little hand. Nearly every chief in Rajputana took part in their direful quarrel: a revival, in the nineteenth century A.D., of the great mythical war in the fourteenth century B.C. of the *Mahabharata*. In a fatal moment both sides sought the support of the infamous Amir Khan and his black banditti of renegade Mahrattas and Pindharis, who accorded it now to one side and now to the other, as the rivals outbid each other for his mercenary and merciless sword. In his extremity the Rana of Udaipur besought the intervention of the English. Under the influence of the cruel orders from home, this was refused; and driven to despair, the miserable father yielded to the demand of the scoundrel Amir Khan to have his daughter murdered. She, now eighteen, and Greek in the loveliness, grace, and sweetness of her perfect beauty, and obedient to a fate that would bring her house and distracted country peace, attired as a royal bride, took the poisoned *kasamba* bowl timidly proffered to her, and crying out gallantly, "This is the bridegroom

foredoomed for me," drank of it, and fell in a deadly swoon at the feet of her weeping handmaids. The heart-breaking tragedy filled India, and filled England, with anguish, and horror, and remorse; and served more to convince the conscience of the people of England of the iniquity of our pusillanimous perfidy toward Rajputana, after the second Mahratta war, than even the representations of Lord Minto on its improvidence and folly.

It fell to the Marquis of Hastings, as seventh Governor-General, to carry out the virile policy recommended by Lord Minto; and after settling scores with Nipal, he carried through his short and thoroughly effective campaigns of the year October 1817 to 10th February 1818. They were signalised by the victories of Kirki, Nagpur, Mehedpur, Korigaum, and Ashte, involving the virtual extermination of the Pindharis; and were felicitously terminated by the Treaty of Mandeshwar, in Rajputana, by which a final arrangement was made with the Mahratta States of the Deccan, and the British protectorate over Rajputana was permanently constituted. The Holkar had to give up all his conquests in Rajputana; and the state of Bundi was liberally compensated for its disinterested loyalty to the British cause.

"And thus in happy days, and rest, and peace,"

the fourth Mahratta war was brought to its beneficent end.

The fort of Asirghai indeed was not taken until the 9th April 1819. It crowns an isolated hill of the Satpura range, south of Mhow and Indor, both away on the other side of the Nerbudda. I lived there for some two years between 1832 and 1839; and I believe I can correctly recall every prominent feature of the fortress and of the rock on which it stands.[1] I certainly could draw a good ground-plan of its platform and a recognisable silhouette of its profile; and I well remember the awe and execration with which to that day the people about me spoke of the Pindharis in the last Mahratta war. And still to that day, on every one of the six occasions on which I crossed the Nerbudda, going and returning

[1] As an assiduous diarist of atmospheric phenomena I would here note that Asirghar is one of the finest of stations for the observation of sunrises and sunsets, and moonlight effects. In the clear sapphire of the earth's shadow we call the night the stars do not shimmer, but shine with the bright steady glow of distant orbs hanging at different altitudes in the illimitable heights of the heavens; and the face of the moon is seen in full relief, and to be not of silvern, but of a pearly radiance of the most exquisite nacre. The varying remoteness and magnitude of these worlds upon worlds define an interstellar perspective leading the eye in every direction beyond "the Pillars of the Seven Planets" and beyond the "Towers of the Twelve Signs" of the Zodiac, on and on through endless vistas of glory into the very mystery of Infinity; and the mind, losing the sense of time, as measured by days and months and years, seems, by a transmutation over-mastering all materiality and self-consciousness, to pass into the absolute, unconditioned, and perfect life and light of Eternity. These Vindhyan sunrises and sunsets also have their own fulness of glory, and may be compared in their magnificence with those to be seen from Edinburgh Castle and Stirling Castle, but they have not the celestitude, and do not inspire the wonder, awe, and worship of the moonlit nights of Asirghar, ringing through all their sapphire depths with the song of the "Trisagion": *'Agios 'o Theos*, *'Agios Ischyros*, *'Agios Athanatos.*

from Mhow and Indor, or from Rajputana, there was some murderous scrimmage afoot along the rough country-side by the right bank of the river; and every day arrows were discharged at the palanquin, or the pony whereon I happened to be borne. This condition of things, only seventy years ago, is now entirely forgotten, if it was ever realised, by the sleek dwellers of the populous maritime cities that have grown up in India under the ægis of the British *raj*—Bombay, Madras, Calcutta, and Karachi. But they remain living memories for Khandish, Bhopal, Malwa, and Rajputana; and in all the domestic histories of the reigning Rajput families, after the sickening record of the untoward calamities of the fifty-seven years from 1761 to 1818, there is a sudden change to the joyous and frankly grateful acknowledgment made of the improvement of the material and moral condition of the country, and in the position of the sovereign princes, under the operation of the terms of the treaty of Mandeshwar; and in every instance these histories associate the redemption of Rajputana, as of a brand plucked out of the burning, with the ever revered and beloved name of Colonel James Tod.

This is a round, unvarnished tale, running through the twenty centuries from Alexander the Great to Muhammad ibn Kasim, and onward to Karim Khan, of the persevering hostility of the high-souled Rajputs toward every intruder into India, and every brutal persecutor of the Hindus; a hostility inspired to the last, as from the first, by

the unquenchable love of individual freedom, and the unyielding, self-reliant fortitude denotative of every pure-blooded Aryan race. In all the unrivalled record of their continuous warfaring, whatever the emergency of their fate, their spirit was never broken; and, whatever the storm and tempest of unequal battle, their rent flag was never lowered. When it could no longer be upheld against the enemy, they raised the signal of the *johur*, and fought to the high purposed end of every good fight between gentlemen of "fire i' the blood."

The practical questions suggested by the trumpet-tongued chronicle, pressed on Englishmen as well as on Rajputs, are:—What causes have conduced to the vitality of the Rajput passion for personal virility? and:—What lessons have the results of them, as read in their history, for ourselves in especial?—not as an imperial people, for that wider scope of the question lies beyond my province here, but as individual men living the round of our daily lives among other men. The less invidious course will be to let the reply to the first interrogation be the reply also to the second. The predetermining and preponderating influences in the development of the strong historical personality of the Rajputs have been the superiority of race they as Aryans share with the English and other Germans in Europe and America, the French and other Latins, and the Greeks, the Russians, and the Persians; and the proper pride fostered by the self-consciousness of

this ethnical superiority; and the righteous exclusiveness, engendered of this pride, with which they have, by rigorously avoiding mixed marriages, sought to uphold the pristine purity of their Aryan strain. The distinguishing note of this superiority is virility, as shown in every worthy and beseeming quality implied thereby, temperance, endurance, patience, fortitude, magnanimity; and again in all these natural virtues educated to their perfected expression in the characters of chivalrous men. Of such are the "brave in the dark," the "heroes before Agamemnon," and in our day the innumerable English youths who, "steeped in honour and in discipline," yearly yield their lives a last sacrifice to patriotism, unwept, unhonoured, and unknown, because there is no Homer to immortalise their deeds. Their daring is its own reward; and their one desire to find in the "enemy" they needs must meet an equal daring to their own. In Fletcher's *Bonduca* the prayer of Caratach to the British war "god"[1] Andate is:—

> "Give us this day good hearts, good enemies,
> Good blows o' both sides, wounds that fear or flight
> Can claim no share in:—
> Let Rome put on her best strength, and thy Britain,
> This little Britain, but as great in fortune,
> Meet her as strong as she, as proud and daring."

This is the prayer of every British soldier when marching into "the Field of Slaughter," and this

[1] Andate, or rather Andraste, or Andras, was a goddess, and in Fletcher's play of *Bonduca* (Boudica, "Boadicea") the word "god"

was the prayer every Rajput prince, when solemnly entering on a campaign against Delhi, Gwalior, or Indor, addressed to Siva in his most ancient fane of Vindhyan Ekalinga.

This virility, the essential element of all virtue, has been perpetuated from father to son, through seventy generations, among the Rajputs, by their antique system of domestic education. They have never confused instruction with education, for they have never confounded knowledge with character; but have ever recognised that manual dexterities and intellectual acquirements, the inherent powers of the very intellect itself, are vain things, unless behind them is the protecting, controlling, co-operative, and omnificent force of a just, benignant, fearless, and resolute character; matured in the warriors of Rajputana by two thousand years of the stubbornest oppugnancy to the heaviest malignities of fate; and refined and elevated to a national, or, rather, ethnical ideal, by the obligation to study the history of that per-enduring argument of shed blood, laid as a religious duty on every

is applied to her as "the masculine of honour." The speech Fletcher puts into the mouth of "Caratach" (Caradoc, "Caractacus," Caird) should be compared with the *Historia Romaike* of Dion Cassius, lxii., Nero, 6. Compare also one of the Latin ballads of the period of the decline of the Roman Empire sung by the legionaries after a victory, and probably during the actual fighting:—

"Mille mille decollavimus,
Unus homo mille decollavimus.
Mille vivat qui mille occidit.
Tantum vini habet nemo
Quantum fundit sanguinis."

young Rajput of any pride in his race and lineage: this history being taught them not in its dead-letter of dates, and statistical tables of "moral and material progress," but in its living and moving spirit, as caught and handed down from man to man by the perfervid genius of their tribal poet Chand Bardai. The *Mahabharata*, the *Ramayana*, and the *Prithviraj Chauhan Rasha* are the choice historical library of every Rajput gentleman: and this, simply, is why, in spite of the calculators, the economists, and the sophisters with whom we have overflooded India, and who have extinguished for ever the epic life of Europe, the age of chivalry has not yet passed away from Rajputana. These poems have the same influence in forming the historical personality of the Rajputs as that exercised by the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, the plays of Shakespeare, and the Bible, "books that show, contain, and nourish all the world," in moulding the national character of the English, as seen at the very zenith of its typical and specific greatness in the eighteenth century. Germany, England, and America, there is no exaggeration in saying, owe everything they are and have to the Bible,—that Paradise of antique learning, that other "well of English undefiled," that palæstra of healing discipline, that school of moral truthfulness, that touchstone of personal honour, that "quick forge" of the Holy Spirit, that treasure-house of all grace and benediction, the bedrock of our national greatness, the sure staple, proof, and bulwark of our

defence. To steep and imbue the souls of men, and from childhood, in these books is indeed what alone can quicken the dead clay of mere clerical and technical proficiency into operative life and unquestioned magistery; and of all professional experts this baptism with the true Promethean fire is the imperative prerequisite of the warrior, who would be a leader of warriors, of the type of King,

"*Henry* the fift, that man made out of fire,"

as he is finely phrased by Drayton; and, coming to our own day, of that other right heroical and illustrious English *agnikula*, the Viscount Wolseley. In the *Rig Veda* the poet and the warrior are one; both are *agnikulas*. The hero fires the poet, and the poet in return rekindles the generous flame in other heroes.[1] The one has no life without the other,

[1] Simon Ockley, in his wonderful "History of the Saracens," relates how at the battle of Aignadin, 13 July 633, wherein the Emperor Heraclius I. was defeated by Kalid, the celebrated General of the Caliphs Abubekr and Omar, the beautiful and patriotic Arabian women danced in the rear of the ranks of the Saracen army, singing: "Fight on, fight on, and we kiss you and embrace you! Turn not back, turn not back, or we scorn and spurn you!" On the first charge of the imperial troops the Saracens did turn back, and would have fled, but that the women rallied them with taunts and jibes, when refacing the Greeks Kalid gained the victory over Heraclius, not only thoroughly routing the Greeks, but practically annihilating their whole force. Of this character must have been the Saltatiunculæ and Ballistea, or ballads sung to dancing, and to the tetrametric trochaic beat of the war dance, in the Roman armies: and the form of these ballads thus quite naturally became that of the earliest hymns of the Christian Church. In the advancing procession of the Muharram, as witnessed at Bombay, the dancing step of the "Tiger-men" and other mummers is exactly timed to the catalectic tetrametric trochaic metre.

only the poet is ever the predominant partner in their common fame. This is tersely expressed in Sir John Vaughan's lines (1631) "Upon the Battaile of Agincourt" :—

> "What *Povver* is a Poet: that can add
> A life to Kings, more glorious than they had.
> For what of *Henry* is unsung by thee
> *Henry* doth want of his Eternity."

To say nothing of "The Seven Arts" (the "Trivium" and "Quadrivium," answering to the Seven Planets, the three outer and four inner), which in themselves are poetry, in the very mechanical and industrial arts the heroic or the poetic spirit is equally necessary if they are to be elaborated to consummate perfection. The scattered *silpa-darpana*, "Mirrors of Art," of the Hindus, are all, so far as I have seen them, written in metre; and many who have never been in India will have observed at Earl's Court, and other industrial exhibitions, how the Hindu weavers of carpets and other artistic textile fabrics, chaunted in their archaic patternings to the time of their flying shuttles, with the unfailing refrain: "Glory to God in the Highest." The whole worship of the Hindus is hymned; anthems, antiphons, grayles, introits, proses, and sequences, all are there. And therefore it happens that the still living art of India, and the still living chivalry of Rajputana, and the still living religion of the Hindus, are the three only points on which there is any possibility of rallying and regenerating the national life of India, the India of the Hindus.

Miss Festing has therefore done wisely and well in giving to some of the more notable episodes of the tragic history of Rajputana a form that will render them more generally accessible to English readers. In their strange atmosphere and outland circumstance they are fairy tales, but of the faery of a real life, the direction and control of which, by a strange eventful providence, itself another tale of wonderment, has now passed into English hands. But these stories will be profitable to us not only in familiarising us with something of the typical history and character of a noble and famous Indian people whose future we may make or mar. They will be gainful also in stimulating in their English readers those virilities that are as instinctive in themselves as in the Rajputs. The human heart is ever animated and encouraged by the recital of tales of heroism, and Miss Gabrielle Festing's stories "From the Land of Princes" cannot but lead those who read them to mark and consider, and with many intimate self-searchings, the clear, fixed, and unflinching view taken of life, and of its inexorable necessities and stern responsibilities, by the traditional Rajput gentleman; and to receive into their own bosoms some radiation from the fire and splendour of his steadfast and matchless valours. Miss Festing's welcome book could serve no higher purpose. Where duty calls, the Rajput ideal gentleman knows no whimpering scruples, no impotent sentimentalities :—

"Work of his hand
He nor commends nor grieves.
Pleads for itself the fact—
As unrelenting Nature leaves
Her every act."

Miss Festing's book is sure to find a circulation among the Rajputs also; and they will be greatly gratified to learn that a popular interest in their sacrosanct country of "The Seven States" has been aroused in England. This will revive their pride in their own country and themselves, and will, I would fain hope and anticipate, lead at last to the rebuilding, in pure white marble, of Chitor, on the old ground plan, still easily to be traced amid the ruins of the city. This would be a national Rajput achievement of the most auspicious political significance. Of not less felicitous augury would be the dedication, if possible, by the Government of India, of the whole "Kuru-kshetra" or "Kurus'-field," the battlefields of Sthaneshwara and Panipat, to the perpetual service of the public, as a sylvan sanctuary, on the scale, and after the manner, of the National Yellowstone Park in America. And, finally, Miss Festing's book should prepare the way for a new edition of Tod's great work on Rajasthan, edited with the same conscientious reverence for the original text as has been shown by that eminent orientalist Mr. William Cooke in his recent edition of Yule's "Hobson-Jobson," and again by Henri Cordier in his edition of Yule's "Book of Ser Marco Polo." A reproduction of Tod's "Rajast'han" in

the same loyal and worthy spirit and form would have an immense effect in arousing in the Rajputs a sense of their commanding place in the future imperial life of India. If Afghanistan is the Barbican or "Conning Tower" (*bala-khana*, literally "upper-chamber") commanding the plains of the Indus and Ganges, Rajputana is no less the Donjon ("dominium") Keep of Hindustan; even as the Mahratta Country, Sivaji's *svairaj*, is of the Deccan.

As a last word, I would acknowledge my obligations in the preparation of this preface to Kumar Cheda Singh Varma's "Kshatriyas and would be Kshatriyas," just published at Allahabad, and to Purshotam Vishram Mawjee's fascinating paper, "Shivaji's Swarajya," read before the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, 17th December 1903.

GEORGE BIRDWOOD.

Balaklava Day, 1904.

INTRODUCTION

WHEN the first waves of Mohammedan invasion swept down upon Upper India through "those grim north-western passes which every now and then opened like sluice-gates to let the turbid flood of barbarians down into the deep calm waters of the Indian world," the new-comers found mighty states and cities of which, in many cases, little has been left but the name. Greatest of all was Ayodhya,[1] a city of fabulous extent, one of the suburbs of which was said to have been the old town of Lucknow, which the deified hero Rama built and named after his brother Lakshman. Another was Delhi, held in the twelfth century by the chief of the Chohan dynasty, and another was Kanauj.

As the Muslims crashed down upon these Hindu states, one after another they were overthrown even as the princes of Europe long ago were overthrown by the advance of Huns or Saracens. The feebler or less enterprising remained to submit themselves to their new masters, and make the best of altered conditions; the more daring and active retreated from the broad and fertile plains, the lands watered by streams, to a wilder country that was less tempting to the foemen's greed, and

[1] The modern Oudh.

more difficult of access. Among the forests and ravines of the Aravali hills, through the drift of the desert sands, on the dreary levels where a great salt river loses itself in wide-spreading marshes, or on the wild heights and precipices of the Pat'har, a rocky plateau where wild beasts and wild men dwelt apart—hither the remnants of "the thirty-six royal races" of the Hindus retired to escape the hated invader; and here they established the different states now known collectively as "Rajast'han," "the land of princes," Rajwarra, or Rajputana.

Once established in these inhospitable regions, the members of the clans—the Rajputs, as they are called—showed themselves well able to keep what they had taken. After the first inevitable conflicts and bickerings with the tribes already in possession, they settled down in amity with the original owners of the land, who were taxed but not expelled. As the Rajputs increased and multiplied, younger sons went out in all directions to seek their fortunes, and repeated the process by which their fathers had gained land and dominion. The natural defences of the country, whether hills and ravines or desert sands, protected them against the increasing strength of the Muslim, and although their fortunes were sometimes reduced to the lowest ebb, they were never entirely crushed by an invader. When all was said and done, there was little booty to be obtained from Rajast'han. The most fertile, and therefore least defensible of its provinces, Gujarat and Malwa, were seized by

Mohammedan conquerors in the fourteenth century, and since that time their territory "has been mainly defined by one or both of two conditions —comparative poverty of production, or difficulty of access." Under these conditions they held their own with more or less success under the Moghul Emperors of Delhi, and it was not until the beginning of the nineteenth century, when the Mahratta hordes were overrunning the country, that the last hour of Rajast'han seemed to have arrived.

At this crisis, the Marquis of Hastings, then Governor-General of India, interposed. The various marauders, whether Mahrattas or Pindarris, were expelled by bribes or threats ; boundaries were defined, territories given back to the rightful owners, and peace was established under the protection of the English, who thus rescued "the only ancient political structures in Northern India" which had survived the chaos following the death of the Emperor Aurangzib. How complete had been the overthrow wrought by Mahrattas, Sikhs, Afghans, and other freebooters may be gathered from the fact that, at the end of the eighteenth century, "very few indeed of the reigning families in India could boast more than twenty-five years of independent and definite political existence." The states of Rajputana alone suffered little essential change, either in their extent or in their internal administration, for six centuries.

It must not be understood that Rajast'han or Rajputana means the land of the Rajputs in the

same sense in which England means the land of the English. There are Rajput communities scattered all over India, and in many of the states of Rajputana the Rajputs are numerically weaker than other tribes. But it is the Rajputs who have governed and dominated in Rajast'han, as of old the Lombards held sway in the country called after them Lombardy.

Roughly speaking, Rajputana lies between the frontier of Sind on the west and Agra on the east, between the southern frontier of the Punjaub on the north and the Mahratta states on the south. The principal Rajput States are Mewar, Marwar, and Amber, which by some chance have come to be known by the names of their chief cities. Thus Mewar is now known as Udaipur, Marwar as Jodhpur, and Amber as Jeypore. Other states are Haravati or Harouti (commonly called Boondi), Jessulmer, Bikanir, and Kotah; and there are many more of lesser importance.

All the ruling tribes claim descent either from the Sun or the Moon. The Sesodias, the dominant tribe in Mewar, are the oldest and purest race in all India, and their chief, the Rana, bears the title of "The Sun of the Hindus." But every Rajput is by birth a gentleman, however poor he may be, and the chief is only the first among equals.

The Rajput character is sufficiently displayed in the stories which follow. Indolent, unless roused by some excitement—which was generally hunting or fighting—they scorned to till the soil or to engage in any business; commerce and agricul-

ture were left to the other tribes who dwelt within their borders. Brave to recklessness, prompt to sacrifice lands, wealth, even life itself for a point of honour, they could be guilty of what seems to the Western mind the most cold-blooded and revolting treachery without losing credit in their own eyes. Otherwise their chief defects seem to have been the love of gaming and the love of opium.

In history and tradition the Rajput women play a most important part. In early times we find even queens and princesses going freely in and out amongst the men, sharing in their sports and exercises, and sometimes riding with them to battle. As the Mohammedan rule gained ground in India, the Mohammedan fashion of secluding the women was adopted even by the Hindus, and the wives and daughters of the Rajputs were kept behind the curtain. There, however, they were still in touch with the outside world, and influenced affairs public and private. Even in the days when widows were Suttee, if a Rajput chieftain died, leaving a minor to succeed him, the boy's mother became guardian or regent for her son. In their legends of princes and heroes, it is the women—their wives and mothers—who are represented as stirring them to noble actions.[1] The stories given here show over and over again how a Rajput woman could hearten husband or son by brave words and brave deeds.

[1] See "The Story of Jeswunt Singh of Marwar" and "The Third Sack of Chitor."

There is nothing upon which the Rajput prides himself so much as purity of blood. This led to a somewhat objectionable practice in former years, as parents were in the habit of putting their infant daughters to death, because they feared being unable to find husbands for them. No Rajput may take a wife from his own clan ; all *mésalliances* are out of the question for women ; and for a girl to reach womanhood unmarried is strictly forbidden by Hindu custom. Thus nothing remained for the father of many daughters but to give them a little of the opium which he was sure to have about him, as soon as they had opened their eyes upon the world.[1]

With this cruelty there mingled a certain respect and regard for woman that recalls something of Western chivalry, which, however lofty in abstract principle, was apt to become somewhat brutal where individuals were concerned. History and legend tell how a Rajput warrior would run deadly risks at the request of some woman, and there was a saying that three things alone might not be asked of a Rajput—his horse, his sword, and his mistress.

For the rest, the Rajputs paint themselves in these stories with more fidelity and spirit than can be achieved by pages of description.[2]

[1] See "The Story of the Virgin Princess."

[2] This Introduction has been founded mainly upon Sir Alfred Lyall's essay on the Rajputs in the first series of his "Asiatic Studies."

STORIES OF MEWAR AND MARWAR

THE LEGEND OF BAPPA RAWUL

MANY hundred years ago, in a city of India called Balabhipoora, there lived a great and powerful raja whose name was Silladitya.

He had ruled well and prosperously for a long time, and none of his enemies had been able to stand against him. Whoever fought with his army was sure to be defeated, for Raja Silladitya was the child of the Sun, and his father protected him.

Within the walls of Balabhipoora there was a sacred fountain, to which the Raja was wont to go when he was threatened by his foes. He would stand beside it, uttering the spell which his father had taught him, and from its depths would rise the radiant seven-headed horse that draws the chariot of the Sun through the heavens. When Silladitya rode forth to battle mounted on its back, his enemies were all obliged to flee.

Now it came to pass that Balabhipoora was besieged by a host from the north. They might have striven for ever with Silladitya without prevailing, but for his prime minister, who had a grudge against the Raja, and stole by night into

the enemies' camp. "Give me my reward," he said, "and I will show you how you may vanquish Raja Silladitya and take Balabhipoora."

So they promised to give him what he asked, and he told them the Raja's secret. "Raja Silladitya is everywhere victorious, because of the horse of the Sun, his father, that he can call up from the sacred fountain. But if the sacred fountain be defiled, then the Sun will be displeased, and the horse will come no more at the Raja's summons."

Then the enemy rejoiced greatly, and the wicked minister went back into the city, and secretly poured the blood of a cow into the waters of the sacred fountain.

Soon afterwards, a messenger came to the Raja, and said, "The foe is mustering in battle array against the city."

So the Raja ordered out his troops to oppose them, and went and stood by the fountain and called aloud on the name of the seven-headed horse. But the depths were unstirred, and there was no movement in the waters.

Then the Raja knew that the spell was broken, and that his father would hear him no more. He died, sword in hand, at the head of his army, and the enemy sacked Balabhipoora.

His wives were all burned on his funeral pyre, save one, who was far away from Balabhipoora. She had gone on a pilgrimage to her own country, and was returning home when a messenger met her with the news that Raja Silladitya was dead,

and that Balabhipoora was in the hands of the enemy.

The poor Rani was so heart-broken at these tidings that she could go no further. She crept into a cave among the hills, and there her little son was born. She gave him into the care of a Brahmin priest, beseeching that the child might be reared as a Brahmin, but married to a woman of Rajput blood. Then she lay down and died, and the priest took the baby home to his daughter, who called it "Goha" or "the cave-born," and brought it up with her own children.

The Brahmin and his daughter were as kind as any foster-parents could be to their little charge, but Goha soon proved himself so unruly that they could do nothing with him. It was useless trying to bring him up as a Brahmin; he killed birds, he played with Rajput children, he quarrelled and fought, he hunted wild beasts, and at last, when he was only eleven years old, he ran away from the Brahmins, and joined the wild Bhils who lived in the forests and hills.

The Bhils, "the children of the forest," are descendants of the races that peopled India before history began—little dark men, armed with bows and arrows, great hunters and trackers of game, who move swiftly and noiselessly as ghosts about the jungles where they have dwelt ever since their forefathers took refuge there from invading hordes. They pay no tribute, they acknowledge no master, and govern themselves by their own laws and customs. A tribe of these men was living in the

tract of land called Edur, to the south of what is now known as Mewar or Udaipur, and it was with them that Goha passed his days, hunting and wandering as he pleased.

Once some of the young Bhils and Goha were hunting together when the little men for a jest determined to choose a king, like their more civilised neighbours. They elected Goha, and one of the Bhils drew blood from his finger, and marked the young man's brow with the *teeka*—the sign of sovereignty which is made on the forehead of a king. When the old chief of the Bhils was told what they had done, he approved of it, and made a grant of all Edur to Goha and his descendants, who are known as Ghelotes.

For eight generations the Ghelotes ruled Edur and the Bhils, and then the wild men grew weary of being governed by a strange race. When the reigning prince was hunting, he was attacked and slain, and his family were obliged to escape as best they might.

The kindly Brahmin's daughter who befriended Goha had left descendants who were the hereditary family priests of the Ghelotes. One of these now came forward to save the dead prince's child, a boy of three years old. At first he was taken to a hill fortress in one of the wildest parts of the country, where a friendly Bhil guarded him. After a while, the priest feared for him, even there, and he was brought to a sacred town called Nagindra, about ten miles to the north of what is now the city of Udaipur. Here, at the foot

of a lofty mountain, cleft into three peaks, the Brahmins worshipped "the great god" Eklinga or Siva, and the bull on which he rides.

In this lonely place, a land of woods and streams, the little prince was hidden by his mother. He was called only "Bappa," which means "child," and was reared with the other boys of the village. Like them he used to be sent out with the herds of kine, from dawn to dusk; like them he played and amused himself. But he soon gained the mastery over them, and as he grew up his fellow herdsmen were ready to obey him in anything that he commanded.

There is a particular festival in the year on which it is the custom for Indian boys and girls to amuse themselves by swinging from the trees. When Bappa was growing into a strapping boy, the daughter of the chief of Nagindra and all the village girls went to the groves of a temple to keep this festival, and found to their great disappointment that they had no ropes wherewith to hang their swings.

Now it chanced that Bappa was wandering through the grove, and when the girls saw him they begged him to bring a rope. "A rope ye shall have," said Bappa, "and ye shall swing to your heart's content, if ye will first play one game with me."

"And what game shall it be?" asked the chief's daughter.

"Let us play at being married," said Bappa.

Eastern children are as fond as Western children

of playing this game, whether with their dolls or amongst themselves, and the girls were quite ready to do as Bappa wished. His shawl was tied to the scarf of the chief's daughter, and he, she, and all the girls of the village, to the number of six hundred, took hands and danced round a tree. This was all part of the marriage ceremony as they had often seen it, and they trod the measure gaily. Then they swung from the trees until it was time to return to the village, and thought no more of the game.

But Bappa gathered all his fellow herd-boys, and made them swear a solemn oath to say nothing of what he had done that day, and to tell him all that they should hear from others.

It was about this time, while Bappa was still driving the cows to pasture every day, that the elders of the village began to notice that the brown cow, the finest of the herd, yielded no milk when she came home in the evenings. When this had happened every day for many days, they began to think that Bappa must take the milk for himself, and they set spies upon him.

Bappa soon discovered what they were doing, and was very angry. He was no thief, he said; although the brown cow was milked dry before she came home, he never laid a finger upon her. He now set himself to watch the brown cow, and noticed that she daily strayed from the herd. One day he followed her through thicket and grove until he came to a little wooded valley. Among a tangle of bushes there stood an altar to Siva, and

beside it was the errant cow, the milk streaming from her udder upon the stone.

Near the altar, in a trance, lay a saintly hermit, who by prayers, fasts, and penances was separating himself from the world and striving to attain heaven. Bappa could not withhold himself from rousing the holy man, who from his wisdom and goodness knew at once that the boy was of princely race and born to great things.

Bappa bowed low before the hermit, saying that he was a herd-boy of Nagindra in search of a missing cow. The holy man answered him kindly, and told him that the pious cow came every day to the valley to give her milk to altar and hermit.

Henceforth Bappa daily followed the cow when she strayed from the herd, and became the disciple of the holy man, whose feet he washed, and to whom he brought offerings of milk and flowers. The holy man taught him the mysteries of Siva, and Bappa devoted himself to the god. Once, we are told, after the hermit had given him the sacred threefold cord, Bappa had a vision of Siva's wife, the awful goddess, Bhavani. Red-robed, and borne on her tiger, she appeared before him, bringing the arms wherewith he was to conquer the land. She gave into his hand a lance, a bow, and a quiver of arrows; she girt him with the two-edged sword, wrought on no earthly anvil, but forged by Viswakarma, the craftsman of the gods, who began to make the great image of Jagan-natha, which no man since

has been able to finish. None save a hero or a demi-god could wield that sword, for it weighed half as much as a full-grown man.

When this was over, the holy man knew that his task was done, and he said to Bappa, "To-morrow morning I shall be freed from this world and ascend to the skies. Be here at dawn, that thou mayest receive my blessing as I go."

Bappa promised to be at Siva's altar very early, to bid his teacher farewell; but he overslept himself, and when he reached the valley the hermit was nowhere to be seen. He searched brake and thicket, but to no avail, and at last raised his eyes to heaven. There in mid-air floated a shining chariot, upborne by beautiful winged forms, the Apsaras, the handmaids of the gods, who had come from Indra's paradise to waft the holy man from earth. The hermit looked down and saw Bappa far beneath him. "Reach upwards," he commanded, "and receive my blessing."

At the word, we are told, Bappa grew and grew, till he attained the stature of twenty cubits. "Open thy mouth," ordered the holy man, and as Bappa obeyed, he spat upon his disciple. Bappa, shocked and disgusted, swerved aside, and the saint's spittle fell upon his foot, instead of going into his mouth. "Hadst thou done as I bade thee," were the hermit's parting words, "thou shouldest have been immortal, to live for ever and ever. As it is, no weapon shall be able to harm thee."

After this Bappa went home to his mother, and

told her all that had passed, and she, overcome by the marvel, confessed that he was no peasant, but the son of a prince and of a prince's daughter. Forthwith Bappa declared that he would herd cows no longer, and set forth to seek his fortune.

It was indeed time that he left Nagindra, for a horrible scandal had just convulsed the village. The chief's daughter had reached marriageable age, and a suitable husband was found for her. The preparations for the wedding were beginning when the Brahmin who had been called to draw out her horoscope, declared that the planetary signs showed her already to be a wife.

Dire was the wrath of the village elders when the sobbing culprit confessed to "the game at marriage" on the festival day. And well might they be angry; for, according to law and custom, by the clasping of hands, the tying of garments, and the measures trodden about the tree, Bappa had become the husband of all the six hundred marriageable girls in the village.

Warned in time by one of his fellow herdsmen, Bappa fled from the enraged parents of his wives, and made his way to Chitor, a city founded on a rock in the centre of a great plain. Here ruled his mother's brother, of the race of the ancient lords of Malwa, who gave his nephew a hearty welcome.

The kindness and favour shown by the prince to the young stranger, who came none knew whence, offended all the nobles of the land, and when Chitor was threatened by an invader, one

and all refused to lead their men into the field. If Bappa was worthy of all that his uncle had bestowed on him, they said, Bappa could meet the enemy single-handed. They would rather forfeit their lands to the prince than fight for him.

Nothing daunted, Bappa prepared for the struggle. The chiefs were shamed into following him in spite of their jealousy, the enemy was defeated, and gave his daughter in marriage to Bappa. Then the disaffected nobles boldly declared themselves weary of their prince's rule, and proposed to Bappa that he should dispossess his uncle and take the crown of Chitor for himself. Bappa was nothing loth ; with the help of the nobles he drove out the prince, and became the master of the country. The hermit had named him "the regent of Eklinga" (Siva) ; besides this title Bappa now called himself "the sun of the Hindus, the preceptor of princes, and the universal lord."

For many years he ruled Chitor with a strong hand, and extended his boundaries on every side. He married many wives, including a princess from the island of Bunderdhiva, who brought with her dowry the statue of the guardian goddess—"Vyanmata," "the mother," who for many generations protected Chitor until a cowardly ruler abandoned it in the hour of need. The son of Bappa and the island princess succeeded to Chitor after his father's death or disappearance.

The end of Bappa's life, like the beginning, is lost in a tangle of legends. When he was a very

old man, so goes the story, he left Chitor, his wives, and his family, and led an army into the far west, conquering as he went. He reached Khorasan, where dwelt the wild tribes of the northern hills, and there established another kingdom. All the rulers of the west, the lords of Ispahan, Kandahar, Kashmir, Irak, Iran, and Kafristan, paid him homage. Still eager to marry as in his boyhood, he took the daughters of all these kings as his wives, and amongst them they bore him a hundred and thirty sons. These sons were the fathers of a hundred and thirty Pathan tribes. Then suddenly he grew weary of Khorasan as of Chitor, left his conquests and his pomp, and wandered further still, to Mount Meru, the holy mountain. There he lived as an ascetic, chastening himself by fast and penance; and there he died—or was buried alive—at the age of a hundred.

Even after death wonders and marvels followed him. His old subjects and his new subjects disputed over his dead body; the Hindus would have it burned, the men of Khorasan insisted upon burying it. Long did they wrangle and fight without coming to any decision, until some one by chance lifted the pall that had been thrown over the corpse. Not a vestige, not a trace remained of what was once Bappa Rawul, but countless lotus flowers were springing from the ground where it had lain.

Bappa was the ancestor of the Sesodias, the Rajput tribe of Mewar. His immediate successors bore like himself the title of Rawul; later on it

was changed to that of Rana. Since Bappa's day the lord of Mewar has ever been "the regent of Siva," with the right to perform the duties of a high priest when he visits the temple of the god.

NOTE.

After leaving Nagindra, a tradition makes Bappa fall in with the sage Goruknath at the Tiger's Mount (a well-known sanctuary near Chitor) and obtain from him an enchanted sword which could cleave rocks. This, in Colonel Tod's time, was still worshipped at Udaipur. It seems as if this story were a distorted echo of that which has already been told. After receiving a sword and arms from Bhavani herself, Bappa could need no other weapon.

In any case, tradition clearly makes it the first sword—"the sword of Viswakarma"—that was afterwards guarded by the snake women in the caverns beneath Chitor. (See "The Story of Rana Hamir.")

THE FIRST SACK OF CHITOR

(A.D. 1303)

UPON an isolated platform of rock that towers out of the level land surrounding it on all sides stands the city of Chitor, once the capital of Mewar. The solitary hill, crowned with the ruins of temples and palaces, looks, as has been said with aptness, like a huge battleship ploughing its way along the plain. In olden times Chitor was the chief city of Rajast'han, under special protection of a goddess who dwelt upon its hill; now, thrice sacked by the Islamite, deserted by the goddess and by the royal house of Mewar, only the shadow of her glory remains. Temple and palace, fort and shrine still stand, and the hot dry climate has scarcely allowed the passing ages to leave a trace upon the wealth of carving that adorns the great Tower of Victory, built by Rana Kumbho, in sign of his crushing defeat of the Muslim ruler of Malwa. But all is desolate; the streets echo no more to the hoofs of war-steeds, and no little feet wander among the tangled thickets where once stood fair pleasure-gardens—

> "The grey apes swing and the peacocks preen
> From fretted pillar and jewelled screen,
> And the wild boar couch in the house of the Queen."

Its ancient glories live in tradition and in story,

and the memory of those who laid it waste is held for ever accursed. "By the sin of the sack of Chitor" is one of the most solemn asseverations that can pass a Rajput's lips.

At the end of the thirteenth century the ruler of Mewar was Rana Lakumsi, a minor under the guardianship of his brave and chivalrous uncle, Bheemsi. Bheemsi was married to a princess of Ceylon named Pudmani, the loveliest woman in India. Well had it been for them both and for all Mewar had the gods made her less wondrously fair. Far and wide, all over India, men had heard of the beauty of the Princess Pudmani, and at length the report came to the ears of Ala-ad-din, nephew and son-in-law of the kindly old Muslim general whom a revolution had set upon the throne of Delhi.

Forthwith Prince Ala-ad-din gathered an army, and forcing his way through mountain passes and dense forests, reached Mewar, and stood before the gates of Chitor, demanding that Pudmani should be given up to him. But the city, set upon that lonely rock, and girt about by walls and fortresses, was too strong for his men, and he must needs change his tone. Far be it from him, he said, to rob Prince Bheemsi of so precious a jewel; yet, since he might never hope to win such a bride for himself, might he not be allowed to know if her beauty were indeed all that it was reported to be? He would not ask even to gaze upon that face the fame of which had drawn him so far from his own land. Let him but see it reflected in a mirror,

and he would return in peace, never to trouble Mewar again.

Bheemsi, believing his enemy to be honourable as himself, made no difficulties. Ala-ad-din rode up to the gate of Chitor, and passed within the walls. He gazed upon a mirror, wherein he saw the reflection of Pudmani's figure, and then turned to go, with many thanks to her husband, who, not satisfied to bid farewell to his guest at the gates, went with him down the hillside to the outskirts of the besieger's camp.

Within her palace looking over the lake, Pudmani waited for her lord's return. Longer and longer grew the hours, and still he came not. At last the messengers of evil tidings hurried into her presence. Ala-ad-din had relied upon the punctilious courtesy of a Rajput, and posted an ambush at the foot of the hill. At the instant of parting, Bheemsi had been seized by armed men and carried off to the camp. Never should he return to Chitor—so Ala-ad-din had sworn—save in exchange for Pudmani herself.

A council of chieftains, hastily assembled, decided that the kingdom must not lose a strong ruler, nor the young Rana his surest defender; Pudmani must be her husband's ransom. Nor did the princess rebel against their decree; a Rajput woman knew how to keep her honour, and she concealed about her that which would help her beyond the barbarian's reach.

The gates of Chitor were opened, and a mournful procession made its way towards the camp of

Ala-ad-din ; seven hundred closely-curtained palanquins were escorted by a handful of the Mewar nobles, led by Pudmani's uncle Gorah, and his nephew Badul, a boy of twelve years old. The palanquins were set down within tents, and Gorah explained that his niece craved for one half-hour with her husband ere she became the property of the conqueror. Ala-ad-din, having gained his heart's desire, was in good humour. Bheemsi was brought forth, and stayed for some moments within the tent ; then he stepped into the palanquin that had carried Pudmani to the camp, and was taken away by six stout bearers.

Ala-ad-din, who had been waxing impatient, laughed grimly within himself. "Fool!" he muttered, "does he think that I shall part with him so lightly? Now shall I have both prisoner and bride." And he bade his men stop the palanquin.

But at the word the curtains of the other litters were thrown aside, and forth from the tents came, not the princess of Ceylon, surrounded by her attendant ladies, but seven hundred armed men, the chief of Mewar's host ; while the six bearers that had carried each litter threw off their disguise, and proved to be skilled warriors. Closing up their ranks, they fell upon the Muslim host, burning to avenge the treachery and the insult that their prince had suffered.

Fierce as was their onset, and stubborn as was their courage, they could not break through the camp of Ala-ad-din and slay him where he stood. One by one they fell, but their foes lay thick around

them. Vainly did the Muslim host strive to pierce their ranks and overtake Bheemsi, who had sprung from his litter to the back of a fleet steed, and was speeding to Chitor. He was saved, to defend Mewar for some years more, but at a heavy cost; the bravest of her warriors lay dead on the plain below, and among them was Gorah, who had contrived the trick whereby Ala-ad-din was cheated.

The pyres were raised for the widows of the slain men in Chitor; Gorah's wife was about to spring into the flames when she saw the boy Badul, one of the few who had escaped from the battle-field. "O Badul!" she cried, "ere I go hence to join my lord, tell me how he bore himself against his enemy."

"He was the reaper of the harvest of battle," answered the boy. "I followed his steps as the humble gleaner of his sword. On the bed of honour he spread a carpet of the slain. A barbarian prince his pillow, he laid him down, and he sleeps ringed about by his foes."

"Badul, tell me again how my love bore himself on the field?"

"O mother! how shall any tell of his deeds when he left no foe to dread or to praise him?"

The widow smiled down upon the boy, who himself bore many honourable wounds. "Farewell!" she said. "If I tarry longer, my lord will chide my delay." And the flames closed round her.

It was a day of mourning for Mewar; but there was this consolation, that the sacrifice had not been

made in vain. From the walls they could see Prince Ala-ad-din striking camp and marching away, and they might hope that he had learned to be chary of meddling with Rajputs.

The years passed on, and the boy Rana was a grown man, the father of twelve goodly sons. Prince Bheemsi and his wife still lived in honour and happiness in their palace by the lake, the ruins whereof may yet be seen. As for Ala-ad-din, he was now lord of Delhi, having caused the old Emperor to be foully murdered at the moment when he was bending his white head to embrace his nephew. From that day Ala-ad-din established a reign of terror. The more powerful among his subjects were put to death, blinded, imprisoned, their goods confiscated, their children left to beg, should the Emperor chance to be displeased with them; the common people were conciliated by the showers of gold that he cast among the gaping crowds on his march to Delhi. Hated and feared as he was, all went well with him: he was a consummate general, whether in repelling an invasion, putting down a mutiny, or carrying his arms into an enemy's country, and his wealth and prosperity increased daily. His cruelty was relentless, and vented itself not only upon those who offended him, but upon their wives and children; "up to this time no hand had ever been laid upon wives or children on account of men's misdeeds." His Mohammedan subjects, the victims of a "more than Russian system of espionage," durst not visit each other, give feasts, or hold meetings. The

Hindus, ground down by taxes that deprived them of the smallest luxury, in the words of a contemporary chronicler, were "so harassed and beaten that they had not even time to scratch their heads."

In the midst of victories, conspiracies, drunken orgies, or wholesale massacres, the Emperor, so says Rajput story, had never forgotten the lovely face of Pudmani Bhai. The Muslim chroniclers declare that he was urged by a taunt from a wise courtier, who advised him to wrest all territory from Hindu rulers, "to close the road to Multan" against the Mongols, and to give up wine and revelry. However that may be, Ala-ad-din suddenly imposed fresh taxes that deprived his subjects of their last coin of ready money, ordered the contents of his cellar to be emptied at the palace gates, and set forth at the head of an army which surrounded Chitor.

At first the Rajputs laughed him to scorn; the maiden city on her throne of rock had defied many an enemy. But there was one weak point in the fortifications opposite the eastern gate where the ground rose slightly. Here the Emperor bade his men raise a mound. At first he paid them a copper coin for every basketful of earth that was brought; ere the hill had risen to its present height, each basketful of earth, they say, cost him a coin of gold. On the summit of this hill he planted ballistas, stone-slings, mangonels, and other engines of war, that flung their missiles within the walls.

Day by day the besieged saw the circle closing round them, and knew themselves less able to hold the city. Mere valour could not avail them, else

had the Muslim been driven from the ramparts twenty times over. The rainy season had begun, and through the breathless nights the Rana lay on his couch brooding on the ruin that he foresaw. One night, while he tossed from side to side, a voice sounded from the distance, "I am hungry! I am hungry!"

He started up and looked about him; a lamp flickered on roof and pillar, and upon the gigantic form that stood before him. Well did the Rana guess that it was the guardian of the city, the tutelary goddess of Chitor. "What wouldest thou more?" he asked, in awe and fear; "hast thou not drunk enough of Rajput blood?"

"I will drink the blood of kings," answered the terrible voice; "if this city is still to be my throne, let twelve who wear the diadem bleed for Chitor."

She vanished in the darkness, and the Rana waited in silence until the dawn. Then he went forth, summoned his chieftains, and told the vision, but one and all refused to believe it.

"If you will not trust my word," said the Rana at last, "I bid you watch with me here to-night. Perchance the goddess may come again."

By the side of their lord the nobles of Chitor sat and watched through the hours of darkness, and at midnight the voice sounded once more. "I am hungry! I am hungry! Of what avail is it to me that the corpses of thousands of barbarians are strewn around my city? I will have royal blood. Take twelve princes of the Rana's house, one by one. Place each on the throne,

hold over his head the royal umbrella, and wave before him the tail of the ox.[1] For three days let him be lord of Mewar; on the fourth let him meet the foe and his fate. If this is done, I may still dwell in Chitor." The echoes of the voice died away into silence.

There was no dismay, no holding back when she had spoken. There was dispute among the Rana's sons, but it was as to who should be first to die for Chitor. At last the eldest pleaded that it was his right, and the rest yielded. For three days he ruled in Chitor, and on the fourth he fell, sword in hand, among the enemy.

Next came the turn of Ajeysi, whom the Rana loved above all his sons. "At least wait until thy brothers are all gone," besought his father, "let me keep thee a little longer." Unwillingly Ajeysi stood aside and gave up his place to the next in age. One by one the ten princes fell, each rejoicing that he was to be a sacrifice for Chitor, and only Ajeysi remained.

Then the Rana called a solemn council in the Hall of Assembly. "The hour is come," he said, "and I will die for the city; my son shall escape, and perchance he shall one day hold what we have striven to keep."

All the Rajputs cried aloud, "Let us go with you! You shall not die alone. We will put on the saffron robe and the bridal coronet, and die for Chitor."

[1] The fly-whisk used by sovereign princes.

"So be it," answered the Rana; "our women shall first be placed in safety, and we will go forth and meet the foe on the plain."

Beneath the royal palace are said to be vaults and caverns stretching far down into the earth. Hither the Rana's men brought brushwood and logs and jars of oil, and heaped vast funeral pyres. When all was ready, the people of Chitor watched a long procession filing down to the gate of the vaults. All the women of Chitor, from the chief Rani herself to the wives and daughters of the poorest of the defenders, in their holiday array, covered with all their jewels, walked in that procession; and among them was Pudmani, who, all unwillingly, had brought the vengeance of Ala-ad-din upon Chitor. When the last had entered the vaults, the door was closed. Come what might, no Rajput woman should be the spoil of the conqueror.

Then came the turn of the men. One and all clothed themselves in the saffron robe, and put on the coronet worn only by the bridegroom, or by him who would embrace death as a bride. Fain would Ajeysi have led them, but the Rana withstood him. "Nay, my son, get thee gone speedily, and let me know that my house is not utterly destroyed."

A few warriors, by the Rana's command, surrounded Ajeysi, and by good luck, or by the special protection of the goddess, they escaped from Chitor and reached a place of safety. The Rana only tarried to be sure that his son had

made his way through the besiegers, and then gave the word to fling open the gates.

The gates burst asunder, and into the plain descended a horde of warriors, drunk with opium, and mad with thirst for blood. Like a river in spate they descended upon the enemy, dealing death at every blow. But such a handful of men could be crushed by mere weight of numbers, and gradually the Muslim forces overwhelmed them. When the last had died on a heap of slaughtered foes, Ala-ad-din led his troops into Chitor.

There was no sign of life in street, or house, or market-place. All was hushed and still. The conqueror pressed on to the Rana's palace; the guards were gone, the rooms were deserted. The men lay dead upon the plain, but where were the women? The answer came in a cloud of black smoke that issued from the closed door of the vaults, and hung heavy and sickening about the palace.

Not the boldest of Ala-ad-din's soldiers dared burst those doors and set foot within those caverns where the light of day had never shone. But one man, so it is told, has ever braved the terrors of that darkness since the day when the fires were lighted, and he was under divine guidance. Five hundred years afterwards, the Rajput would rather have faced any number of bodily enemies than enter the vaults beneath the palace. Stories were told of strange lights that burned unquenchably over the ashes of the dead, and of a huge serpent that wound his length, coil on coil, in the narrow

passage, and spat fire and venom at any who approached. Even now—so says one who has visited the spot, well knowing Rajput tradition—a nameless fear and mystery hangs about the place where the entrance is said to be.[1]

[1] See Rudyard Kipling's "Letters of Marque" for a description of the city as it is now, and for the story of Pudmani, told as he alone can tell it.

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THE STORY OF RANA HAMIR

IN the days before Ala-ad-din and his army had marched through the empty streets of Chitor, the eldest son of Rana Lakumsi, Prince Ursi, had gone with his train to hunt in the forest of Ondwa. They roused a huge wild boar from his lair, and after a long chase he broke from the forest and took cover in a field of maize, the stems of which were from ten to twelve feet high. The prince and his companions looked about them for some one to drive the boar out of the maize ; there was no one in sight except a sturdy damsel in poor clothes, who was standing on a rude platform, which had been raised in a corner of the field for the watchman whose business it was to scare the birds from the corn.

"Shall I drive out your quarry for you?" she asked, coming up to the prince.

Ursi agreed to this, from curiosity to see what she would do, and the girl pulled up a long stem of the maize, sharpened it at one end, and went back to the platform. The prince and his companions were still wondering at her, when she came back again, dragging the carcase of the boar, which she had pierced with the weapon they had seen her fashion for herself.

In many Christian countries at that time it would have been death for any inferior person to meddle with the game that a prince had marked down; but Ursi took it good-humouredly enough. The girl went back to the field, and the hunters decided to rest and eat beside a little stream that ran past them. They were lying on the banks, talking and laughing over the day's adventures, when whizz! a clay pellet hurtled through the air, and struck the prince's horse, breaking its leg.

All looked up, in anger and surprise, and saw that the girl was standing on the platform and slinging clay balls at the birds who were hovering over the field. When she saw what she had done, she ran down to the stream, and fearlessly asked the prince to forgive the accident; and again he showed no sign of being angry with her, but dismissed her with a few friendly words.

The day's hunting was over, and the prince was riding home with all his train, when once more they saw the girl coming towards them. On her head she bore a jar of milk, and on either side of her ran a little kid that she was leading by a cord. As she passed the riders, a mischievous youth thought that it would be rare sport to make her drop the jar or loose the kid, and he made his horse plunge and kick in the hope of startling her. But the girl, guessing what he intended, without discomposing herself in the least, contrived to make one of her kids run under the horse's legs. The horse stumbled and came to the ground with the rider, and the girl went calmly on her way with

head erect, not having spilled a single drop of milk or left hold of the string.

The prince had been watching this little scene, and called after the girl to ask whence she came.

"I live with my father," she answered; "he is a poor Rajput of the Chundano tribe, and he dwells not far away."

"Tell him to come and see me to-morrow," said the prince, and rode homewards.

Next morning the old man came to the prince, and, to the astonishment of the nobles, sat down beside him, and talked with him as with an equal. But when Ursi asked him for his daughter in marriage, the father refused, point blank; he had no mind for her to wed a prince.

Ursi was too kindly to do as most men in his situation would have been tempted to do—to throw the father into prison and carry off the daughter without further parley. But when the old man went home and told all to his wife, thinking that she would approve, the honest woman gave him a sound rating. What did he mean by being such a fool? he must go back at once, beg the prince's pardon, hand over his daughter, and be thankful. So the old man went back, with many apologies, and Ursi obtained his stalwart bride.

Their child was a son named Hamir, who was only a boy when his father died to save Chitor. The last wish of Rana Lakumsi when parting with his beloved son Ajeysi, was that Hamir might be chosen as Ajeysi's successor on the throne of

Mewar, and Ajeysi promised that, should Hamir be worthy, he should be his heir.

After the terrible slaughter of that day, when the women were burned in the vaults and the men flung themselves upon Ala-ad-din's host, the remnant that was left took refuge with the new Rana, Ajeysi, in Kailwarra, among the mountains. Here they dwelt, secure and forgotten, while Ala-ad-din marched through the land, plundering, spoiling, and laying waste. He defaced or broke down all the principal buildings of Chitor, leaving untouched only the palace of Bheemsi and Pudmani, and appointed a Hindu governor, Maldeo, to hold it in his name. He did the like with other towns and fortresses in Mewar, and then led his men back to Delhi.

In Kailwarra, Hamir was receiving his training in arms, together with his uncle's two sons. It was no ill school for a warrior, that fastness among the western hills; the youths soon knew how to lead a foray, how to lay an ambush, how to baffle the pursuit of an enemy. There were continual skirmishes with the men whom Ala-ad-din had left behind him, and also with the mountain chiefs, freebooters and masterless men, who scouted the thought of submission to a Rana without a throne. The most offensive of these was a certain Moonja, who one day led a raid into the valley in which Kailwarra stood, attacked the Rana, and wounded him in the head with a lance.

The wound troubled Ajeysi little; the insult was one that could only be wiped out in the blood

of the enemy. He asked his sons whether they would avenge him upon Moonja, and obtained little satisfaction. Then he turned to Hamir. "If I succeed, expect me in a few days," said the boy; "if I fail, you will never see me again."

A few days afterwards, great was the joy in Kailwarra to see Hamir riding up to the gates, with something swinging from his saddlebow. "Behold your foe!" he cried, as he laid Moonja's head at his uncle's feet. Ajeysi embraced the lad. "Surely 'tis written on thy brow that thou shalt be lord of Mewar," he said, and dipping his finger into Moonja's blood he made the *teeka*—the mark of sovereignty—on Hamir's brow, thereby recognising him as the future Rana.

There was no trouble with Ajeysi's sons; one died at Kailwarra, the other went out into the world to seek his fortune, and returned not again to his native province. To be Rana of Mewar promised little, at that time, when all the land save the wildest mountain-tracts was under the heel of Delhi. Yet better had it been for Mewar had the exile stayed at home and perished, whether fighting for or against his cousin; from him, in a remote degree, was descended the "mountain rat," Sivaji Bhosla, who defied Aurangzib and founded the Mahratta kingdoms that hereafter were to work the ruin of Rajast'han.

When he succeeded to the title of Rana of Mewar, Hamir at once began to organise the irregular warfare that had been carried on against the Emperor's troops. He sent out messengers to

all his adherents, bidding them bring their families to live in the Kailwarra district, if they would have him protect them, and then set to work systematically to ravage the low-lying lands, to patrol the roads, and to terrorise the imperial garrisons. Soon the fields were uncultivated, the highways deserted, and the Emperor's men durst not venture from behind their stone walls, for fear of Rana Hamir. It was useless to pursue him ; he knew the mountain passes better than his foes, and all the country-side was in league with him.

After some time spent thus in defiance of the power of Delhi, he was surprised by messengers from one of the imperial governors, Maldeo of Chitor, who offered the Rana his daughter for wife. His followers expected some trap, and were urgent that he should refuse, but Hamir mocked their fears. Nothing venture, nothing have ; he was resolved to win back Chitor at all costs, and here was an opportunity for him to see in what condition it was left. So, with a few comrades, he rode to the city of his fathers, to claim the bride.

As he came within sight of Maldeo's palace, he began to feel misgivings. By Rajput custom, when a wedding is prepared, the marriage emblem, a triangle, is hung over the bride's door ; the bridegroom tries to break it with his lance, while the bride's damsels pelt him with sweets and flowers, singing mocking songs. But no triangle hung over the palace gates, no laughing voices derided him as he rode up to the door. There was no sign of festivity or ceremony ; no crowd of

beggars hung about the door, waiting to be fed, no Brahmins or bards were hastening to bless the wedding. Again his followers foreboded treachery, but Hamir silenced them, dismounted, and strode into the hall.

Here he found Maldeo with all his kith and kin, who greeted him as bridegroom and guest. There was no appearance of treachery, but still there was no appearance of rejoicing. At a sign from the father, the bride was brought down into the hall and married to Hamir by a Brahmin, there and then, without any other ceremony than that of tying a corner of the shawl that he wore about his body to a corner of the veil that hid her from sight.

When husband and wife were left alone together, Hamir lifted the bride's drapery, wondering whether he had been cheated into marrying some deformed or hideous creature unfit to be the wife of any man. Under the long thick veil he saw a fair face and a comely figure; yet the figure was bent, as though in shame, and the face was darkened by a look of grief and despair.

"What means this?" asked Hamir. "Why have we been wedded thus, without ceremony or feasting, and why dost thou grieve so sorely?"

"It means this, my lord," she answered, "that thou hast been foully tricked and shamed; thy servant is a widow."

When Hamir heard these words, it was small wonder that he was utterly dismayed; for any Rajput to be married to a widow was a blot and

a disgrace incredible. A virtuous widow should burn herself on her husband's corpse, or if she lived she should give herself to fasting and good works, clothing herself in but one garment, shaving her head, and laying aside all her jewels. A widow was accursed; her presence brought ill luck, her very name of "widow" was a term of abuse. The thought of having married such an outcast was too terrible to be borne.

"When I was yet in the nurse's arms I was married to a husband," went on the woman, "and he was slain in battle. I cannot even recall his face, so young was I when he died."

Had the Rana slain her where she stood she would not have been surprised; but when he neither laid hand upon her nor said a harsh word to her, throwing himself upon the cushions in silent grief, her heart swelled with love and sorrow. "O my lord!" she cried, "pardon thy handmaid, for I am guiltless in this matter. Hear me, and I will avenge thee on those who have put this shame upon thee. I will show thee how thou mayest win back the city of thy fathers."

The Rana roused himself to listen. Widow though she was, his wife had courage as great as his own, and wisdom to help it.

"It is thy right to ask my father for one thing besides the dowry," she said. "Ask him neither for lands, nor horses, nor jewels, but ask him for his councillor, Jal the Mehta. He may not deny thy request, and Jal shall help us at our need."

Much to the disappointment of Maldeo and his

family, the Rana showed neither anger nor shame when he parted from them. He asked for Jal the Mehta, and rode with his bride and his new servant back to Kailwarra.

Two years went by, while the Rana, the Rana's wife, and Jal wove their web. Then came a messenger to Chitor. The Rani wished to bring her year-old boy to the city, to lay him before the shrine of her family god. Maldeo was absent on a warlike expedition, but his son made no difficulties about admitting the Rani when she arrived, escorted by a body of her husband's stout men-at-arms, and accompanied by Jal.

Once within those walls, the Rani played her game with consummate skill. With fair words and promises, or with passionate appeals to their pride, she worked upon those of her father's men who were left behind in Chitor, and when Hamir knocked at the gates they were thrown open to him. The banner of the Ranas, the golden sun in a crimson field, flaunted defiance in the face of Maldeo and his troops when they came back, and to make the situation more clear a volley of ball whizzed about their heads. Through the length and breadth of Mewar went the cry that the Rana had come to his own again. Men flocked to his standard, and he was soon at the head of a vast army. It was now his turn to take the field against his enemies, and one by one they were defeated and driven back. One of Maldeo's sons was slain by Hamir himself in battle ; another became the Rana's man, and won back part of

Mewar for him. The imperial troops could make no stand against Hamir, and the other Hindu princes were his vassals. The glory came back to Mewar and to Chitor. Delhi, convulsed by the revolutions which followed the death of Ala-ad-din, had enough to do within her own bounds, and many long years were given to Hamir to strengthen and to bind together what he had won.

When Rana Hamir established himself in Chitor, he found that the spoiler's hand had been laid heavily upon the city; Ala-ad-din had destroyed or marred everything that he could not carry away. All the wealth that had been stored in the treasury of the Ranas was gone. Hamir recked little of the loss of jewels and gold, but there was one heirloom which he sought long, and sought in vain. This was the great two-edged sword of Viswakarma, with which Bhavani herself had girt Bappa Rawul, the Rana's ancestor. Hamir could not believe that "the mother" would have suffered the slayers of cows to lay hands upon the charmed sword, and yet none knew where it was. It had vanished at the time of the sack, with all else that was precious or sacred, and it seemed as little to be recovered as Pudmani herself.

Hamir still believed that since the gods had restored to him the throne of his fathers, they would also restore the sword forged by their own craftsman, and he poured forth supplications at all their altars, especially entreating Charuni Devi, the goddess of the bards, whose shrine was at the Tiger's

Mount, near Chitor. Charuni Devi heard his prayers, and made known to him that he must look for the sword in the vaults below the Rana's palace.

Every human being had shunned those fearful vaults since the wives and daughters of Chitor had entered them, never to return. Not only might they be haunted by the spirits of the dead women, but it was well known that witches and demons wandered in the darkness of those caverns, and that a great snake barred the passage. Hamir was still undaunted; he had faced many odds ere the down had sprouted upon his upper lip, and ghost or serpent, demon or witchwoman, he was resolved to face all and regain the sword.

Awful was the darkness in which he moved, as he descended down, down into the heart of the earth. He groped his way through narrow passages, unable to see whether his feet were stumbling over the ashes of his own mother and the women of his house, or over uneven places in the ground, and not knowing whether the shapes that seemed to flit past him were hideous bats or yet more hideous demons. At length the passage widened into a lofty cavern, and in the distance he saw the light of a fire. He hastened his steps, and by the flickering gloom beheld the foul shapes that hold their orgies where the light of the sun may never shine—the sorceresses, half women, half serpent, that dwelt in Chitor long ere the "sun-descended" line of kings bore sway on the rock.

"What dost thou here, mortal man?" cried one

of the sisters, as she crouched beside the fire; "and by what right dost thou break in upon our feast?"

Hamir strode up to the fire, over which a vast cauldron was hanging. "I come not to disturb your feast," he answered. "I come to claim what is mine own—the sword of Viswakarma."

More and more terrible waxed the faces of the hags, dimly seen through the smoke of their fire. They spoke not again to Hamir, but they signed to him to take the lid from the cauldron. Hamir obeyed without hesitating, and looked into its depths; what he saw therein may not be told here.

Horribly smiled the serpent women as they filled a dish from the cauldron, and placed it before the Rana, bidding him in dumb show to share their feast. Hamir blenched not, although Bappa Rawul himself might have shrunk from that test. He sat down and ate all that was there. Then from a dark recess in the cavern the hags drew the two-edged sword, and gave it to him in return for the empty dish. Back in the awful darkness, through the narrow winding passages, sped the Rana. He reached the upper air gasping and dizzy; but in his hand was the sword of Viswakarma.

NOTE.

Colonel Tod incidentally tells the story of the recovery of the sword in his account of the chief festivals of Mewar, and makes Maldeo the hero of the adventure. But he admits that another

tradition gives the credit to Hamir, who invoked the help of Charuni Devi. Maldeo, the recreant against his own religion and his own race, was not a heroic character, and, on the face of it, it seems scarcely likely that the guardians of the sword, whether gods or demons, would yield it to any but the lawful heir of Bappa Rawul. So I have ventured to use the version in which Hamir recovers the sword for himself rather than that in which he obtains it, together with his wife, from the treacherous Maldeo.

THE STORY OF PRINCE CHONDA

RANA LAKHA of Mewar, who succeeded to the throne in the end of the fourteenth century, did much to strengthen the work that had been begun by Hamir and continued by Hamir's son. He added to his dominions by wresting many a fair district, both from the Emperor Mahmud of Delhi, whom he defeated in a pitched battle, and from his Rajput neighbours, who had taken advantage of Mewar's weakness to possess themselves of lands to which they had no title. He built the city of Bednore ; he worked the tin and silver mines, the existence of which had been little more than a tradition until his day.

The Rana had two sons ; the elder, Prince Chonda, was brave and honourable, with a punctiliousness that bordered upon extravagance, wise and resourceful, but, like his father, somewhat obstinate withal. The younger, Prince Ragoodeva, was handsome and of such a gentle nature that he was everywhere beloved.

The Rana was one day sitting in his hall, when an embassy came before him, and laid at his feet the cocoa-nut which with the Rajputs is ever the

symbol of an offer of marriage. They came from Rao Rinmull of Marwar to offer his daughter Hansa as a wife for Prince Chonda.

The Rana looked down upon the cocoa-nut, and twirled his long moustaches, while a grim smile flickered upon his lips. "Take it up," he said, "and give it to my son Prince Chonda, for I trow that you would not bring such toys for an old greybeard such as I am."

To a Western ear, the speech sounds harmless enough ; but Prince Chonda, when it was reported to him, was overcome with shame and indignation at his father's want of delicacy. What, was he expected to marry a princess after the possibility of her becoming his father's wife had been hinted ? It was out of the question, he said, and he maintained his point with all the obstinate scrupulousness that was part of his nature ; the cocoa-nut must be sent back to Marwar.

Would he hear reason ? demanded the Rana. How could they put this insult upon a friendly prince, knowing the quickness of a Rajput to avenge slights, and the number of strong sons, who were ready to fight the Rao's battles ?

That mattered nothing, inflexibly returned the son ; honour and decency alike forbade him to think of marrying the Princess Hansa.

Then the Rana lost his temper, and swore that if his son were such a fool, he would indeed marry the lady himself—"and if we should have a son, he shall be Rana after me."

To this Prince Chonda returned with the same

calmness that the Rana might do as he pleased; that he was ready to give up his claims to the throne in favour of any son whom the Princess Hansa might bear to his father; but that nothing should induce him to take her as a wife.

So after much growling at the folly of young men, the Rana accepted the cocoa-nut in his own name. The Marwar princess was sent to Chitor, and married with all due forms and ceremonies, and in course of time she bore a son who was named Mokul.

When the little prince was still a child, Rana Lakha took a sudden resolution; he would lead a holy war against the barbarians from Delhi who had taken the sacred city of Gya. Although he had once defeated them, he had but little hope of returning alive from this expedition, and he made ready for his departure, never counting to see his realm or his sons again. Ere he set out, he sent for Prince Chonda, and asked what inheritance should be settled upon the boy Mokul.

"The throne of Mewar," answered the Prince, remembering his father's words. "Let the sun's disk shine over his head, and let the umbrella be unfurled for him. I will be the first among his subjects."

The Rana was delighted to find that his son was ready to abide by his word. With a heart at rest he could now set forth on the war from which he was fated never to return. The Islamite forces were too strong for the Rajputs, and the holy city was not to be won.

When the news came to Mewar that Rana Lakha lay dead upon the field of honour, Chonda governed in the name of his brother. His seat was next to that of Mokul; the lance, which was his device, followed the Rana's signature on all documents. He ruled wisely and well, and all men loved him; but Hansa the Rani was ill-pleased, in spite—nay, perhaps, because—of the general contentment. 'Twas well for him, she murmured, to put himself next to the Rana wherever he went; the day would come when he would place himself above the Rana, and all this devotion to his brother was but a pretext for getting the power into his own hands, and making himself lord of Mewar in name as well as in deed. She could not keep her suspicions to herself, and after a while they reached Chonda's ears. Knowing that it is waste of breath to argue with a jealous woman, he would not remain longer in Chitor; he resigned all his power and authority into her hands, and withdrew from his brother's court, taking with him some two hundred of his huntsmen, who would not be parted from him.

Having thus rid herself of Prince Chonda, the Rani called her own kith and kin to her aid, and right glad were they to leave the bare plains of Marwar for the fertile valleys of Mewar. Her father, the old Rao Rinmull, himself came to Chitor, and found life there so pleasant that he never wished to return home. Her brothers came, with all their families, and settled about Chitor. One by one, all the nobles of Mewar who

had held important posts at court were ousted in favour of the new arrivals. All power was in the hands of the Rani's brothers, and they did as they pleased.

Men murmured and looked askance, but none dared to speak. The Marwar chieftains were everywhere, and who would care to risk property, even life itself, for the sake of a boy's rights? But there was one person at the court who knew no fear, and that was the Rana's nurse. The history of Rajast'han is full of stories of the fidelity of these women, and little Mokul's foster-mother was brave and devoted as any of her class.

One day Rao Rinmull sat on the Rana's throne in the hall of assembly holding his grandson on his knees. The child grew weary, struggled down, and began to play on the floor, while the Rao still sat on the royal seat, with the sun's disk gleaming above his head. All saw it with silent indignation, and the nurse was incensed beyond bearing. She flung into the Rani's presence, and complained with bitter reproaches that her darling was slighted and set aside, while his place was usurped by an upstart brood from another country.

Then the Rani began to see her own folly, and that very day she upbraided her father with his presumption. But the old Rao was not one to be browbeaten by a woman, and that woman his own daughter. He answered the Rani shortly enough that she had better hold her tongue and submit to whatever he and her brothers chose to do, if she would not have her son lose more than his throne.

As if in token of what she had to fear, in a little while terrible news came to Mewar. Prince Chonda's brother, the gentle, kindly Ragoodeva, had been murdered by the servants of Rao Rinmull, who brought him a robe of honour. Thinking no evil, the prince took it, and whilst he was wrapping it about him, the messengers slew him. All the land grieved for Ragoodeva, and so greatly was he beloved that he was deified by the people, as is sometimes done amongst the Rajputs with those of a noble house who are cut off by a violent and an untimely death. His image was placed amongst the household gods whom the women of Mewar worshipped, and one day in the year was set aside to his memory.

Now was the Queen-Mother well-nigh beside herself with fear. Every day she thought to see those who had slain Prince Ragoodeva lay the dagger to her son's throat, and she knew herself helpless as the meanest of her slaves. Every office was filled by her brothers and their men. To crown all, the Rao had cast his eyes upon one of her own attendants, a free-born woman of the royal house of Mewar, and she had been forced to give the damsel to him as if she had been some common slave or some dancing-girl to be bought for a price. Desperate with terror and with shame, she forgot all her pride—for what was left to her whereof she could be proud?—and sent word to Prince Chonda that he, and he alone, could save Mewar and his brother.

Soon after this, some of the huntsmen who had

gone with Prince Chonda came back to Chitor. They were weary, they said, of his service, and they had come back to the wives and families whom they had left behind them. No one paid much attention to them, and they were allowed to enter the royal castle and to do service there, as of old. Little did the Marwar princess guess that these men bore messages from Prince Chonda to Rani Hansa, bidding her be of good heart, for help was coming. All was quiet enough; the Rani had taken a sudden fit of devotion, as it seemed, and was for ever giving feasts to all the neighbouring villages, and the little Rana would ride out to watch them, with his nurse and the family Brahmin. The Rani's brothers saw no grounds for suspicion, and the Rao, between his new plaything and his doses of opium, had neither brains nor thought for intrigues.

So passed the days until the great "Feast of Lights," given in honour of Laksmi, the goddess of good luck and plenty, when the Rani gave a great feast at Gosoonda, a village seven miles south of Chitor, which was duly attended by her son. For weeks beforehand the potters had made nothing but lamps of every shape and size, and every dwelling was ablaze with light, from the chieftain's palace to the meanest hovel. Amid all the rejoicing the Rana's faithful servants were ill at ease, and they rode homewards with drooping heads. Faithfully they had done Prince Chonda's bidding: they had accustomed every one to see the Rana ride forth to the villages about Chitor,

and they had made a feast at Gosoonda on this day, as he commanded. Yet there was no sign of him, and he had sworn to come to their aid on the "Feast of Lights." Had he forgotten them, or had he been stayed by their foes? If Chonda failed them the last hope of Mewar was gone.

They had reached the fatal hill raised by Ala-ad-din before the eastern gate of the city, when the galloping of horses made them turn to see who came. Forty armed men were approaching them, and the first of the band, poorly dressed but strongly armed, made a sign as he passed the Rana.

"Who comes here?" asked the warders of the gates when the forty men rode into Chitor; and the leader answered readily that he had chanced to be at Gosoonda for the feast, and had been graciously permitted to escort the Rana back to the castle. The warders were satisfied, and the men passed through barrier after barrier until they reached the upper gate—"the gate of Rama." Here the warders spied another and a larger armed force in the distance, and suspected that the strange chieftain was not what he seemed to be.

Finding that there was no hope of getting further by diplomacy, the leader of the band drew his sword. In another moment the walls were echoing to the sound of a well-known war cry; "the Prince had come again," and his huntsmen rushed to his aid. The Marwar princes were taken by surprise, and although they attempted some resistance, they

were soon overpowered. The warders of the gates were killed, and the gates were flung open to the main body of Prince Chonda's force.

The old Rao, who should have been foremost to oppose Prince Chonda and his men, was nowhere to be seen. Having taken his usual dose of opium, he had laid himself down upon a low pallet-bed to sleep. By his side watched the Rajput woman whom he had taken from the Rani's attendants. Whether one of the huntsmen had pitied her sorrows, and given her some hint that the hour of vengeance was at hand, or whether she learned it from the clamour outside, she rose and unbound the Rao's turban. With strong light fingers she swathed it about and about the sleeping man, binding him so tightly to his bed that nothing but cold steel could have set him free. Then she stole away, and the Rao slept the heavy sleep that opium gives, while the whole palace rang to the war-cries of Prince Chonda's men, the clash of arms, and the heavy tramping of feet. At last he woke, to see the faces of his enemies lowering upon him from all sides of the room. His head still clouded by the drug, he vainly strove to spring from his bed; his victim had done her work too deftly, and the old warrior was trapped "by the hand of a woman." A desperate struggle brought him to his feet, the bed still fastened to his back, and he glared about him for a weapon. Sword, or dagger there was none to his hand; a brass basin lay near him on the floor, and, encumbered as he was, he hurled it against his foes with deadly

aim ; the next moment he fell a corpse, shot by one of Chonda's men.

Thus was Chitor purged of her new masters, and Rana Mokul came to his own again. The detested men of Marwar were lying dead between the gates, save a few whose good steeds had borne them away. Amongst these was Prince Joda, the eldest son of Rinmull, who naturally fled to Mundore, the chief town of Marwar, of which he was now lord by hereditary right. But Chonda was at his heels, and he durst not stay. With a hundred and twenty followers he rode further still towards the banks of the Looni River, and drew rein at the house of Hurba Sankla, where he knew that even Prince Chonda would not venture to disturb him.

Hurba Sankla, who lived in the wild district near the boundaries of Mewar and Marwar, was half-warrior, half-devotee. Ready at all times to arm himself for the protection of the weak, and for the help of those in trouble, and with all the Rajput's love of war and foray, he was famed for his charity to the poor, and for the strictness of his religious observances. By all accounts, like our own Robin Hood, he sometimes took from his neighbours wherewithal to bestow in alms. None had ever gone empty from his house, and as they arrived on the night of a religious festival, when great doles of food were freely distributed to all who asked, Prince Joda and his men thought themselves sure of a good meal.

Hurba Sankla received them with all his usual kindliness, though inwardly he was sorely perturbed

at their coming, He had no fear of Prince Chonda's wrath; it was a far cry to the banks of the Looni. But he trembled for the reputation of his house; the last morsel of food had been given away, and there was nothing to set before the hundred and twenty-one men whose appetites had been sharpened by their long ride.

In this crisis the chief's resourcefulness did not fail him. Remembering that in the neighbourhood there grew a quantity of a certain herb, generally used in dyeing, but occasionally eaten in times of dearth, he sent out and had it gathered. He shred it into a pot, added flour to thicken the mess, and sugar and spices to disguise the taste, and set it before Joda and his followers. The food was hot and sweet; the men were tired and hungry. Scarce did they heed the apologies of their host as they flung themselves upon the dish. Having eaten their fill, they lay down to rest, while Hurba Sankla retired to think how to fulfil his promise of giving them a better dinner on the morrow.

When he went back to his guests, he found them awake, and staring at each other in blank amazement. The herb had dyed their long moustaches a brownish-red. Trembling lest they should guess the shifts to which he had been driven, Hurba Sankla feigned joy and surprise, and exclaimed, "A miracle!—a sign from the gods! As those of you who were grey-haired have thus renewed your youth, so shall your fortunes be renewed again, and Mundore shall once more be yours." The men, in the contentment that comes of rest after

long toil, and food after hunger, were ready to accept the omen as he interpreted it, and Hurba Sankla's hospitality remained without reproach.

For many years Joda and his followers lurked among the ranges of the Aravali, living the life of the freebooting marauding chieftains about them, while Chonda ruled Mewar and Marwar alike in the name of Rana Mokul. Time passed, and the Rana came of age to govern for himself; but still Chonda held Mundore. Then the heart of the Rani Hansa began to yearn after her brother—at least, he had paid dearly for his offences, and now that Mokul was firm in the possession of his own, he could afford to return another's property. So by her persuasions she wrought upon the mind of her son until he promised to give back Mundore to Prince Joda.

The news was brought to Joda in his fastness among the hills by a charun.[1] Forthwith Joda hurried to tell the good news to Hurba Sankla and the neighbouring chiefs, and he took the charun with him. While they sat and talked of all that had come to pass, another messenger came hot-foot to tell Joda that the Rana had demanded Chonda's presence, and that only two of Chonda's sons were left to hold Mundore.

There was little pleasure in receiving what was your own by a peaceable cession; why not take it with the strong hand? So thought Joda, and all the chieftains agreed. The chieftain of Mewoh, with his "hundred chosen steeds," would go with

[1] Bard.

him; so would another noted reiver, who was famed for the swiftness of his coal-black horse; and so also would Hurba Sankla, despite his sanctity. While they planned the attack, "the bird of omen"[1] lighted on Joda's spear, and, looking up to the skies, he saw the star under which he had been born, shining with miraculous splendour. "Ere that star descends in the west," cried the charun at his side, "your banner shall wave from the battlements of Mundore."

Chonda and his son Manja were on their way from Mundore to Chitor, obeying the Rana's summons when, turning back, they saw the sky above Mundore glowing red. Chonda was obliged to go on, but he sent Manja to see what was amiss. Manja reached the gates to find the town in possession of Joda, and his brothers slain. The men of Mundore naturally had welcomed their old master, and Prince Manja, finding none to support him, turned to flee. Joda's men pursued after him, and he was overtaken and killed within the territory of Marwar.

Chonda, on hearing these evil tidings, hurried back to Mundore, to be encountered by Joda, who produced the Rana's letters which gave him possession of the city. "Why should there be war between our houses? Let each keep what is his own. If I have slain your sons, you slew my father. Let this be enough of bloodshed, and let us fix the boundary between us."

[1] The bird is not specified, but it may have been a black and white bird like a lapwing, which Tod elsewhere calls by the same title.

By strict rule, Chonda had every right to continue the feud, since he had lost more than Joda. But the good prince realised that for Rajput to war with Rajput was no longer safe, and that the day would come when they must all stand by each other against a common foe. His sons had fallen in fair fight, and he would forego all vengeance. Together the princes—yesterday deadly foes and now sworn friends—marked the boundary between Marwar and Mewar, and Joda agreed that his dominions should end at the spot where Manja had fallen, whereby Mewar gained the rich district of Godwar. A legend says that when the princes were marking the boundary, the ground was covered with the flowers of the "aonla,"[1] and that Chonda decreed that wherever the "yellow blossom" was found, the Rana of Mewar should bear sway. Long afterwards, when in the dark hour of Mewar, Godwar had lapsed again to Marwar, the sons of Mewar remembered the tradition, and pointed to where the "yellow blossom" ceased to bloom, on the border of Godwar, as a proof that the province by right belonged to the Rana's dominions.

Chonda had reason to be thankful for his unselfish loyalty to the Rana's cause; in a time of trouble that soon came upon Mewar, Joda, the former foe, proved himself the staunchest of friends.

[1] A species of mimosa (?).

THE STORY OF RANA KUMBHO

AMONG the nobles of Rana Mokul's court were two brothers, Chacha and Maira ; they were sons of Mokul's grandfather, Rana Kaitsi, and had their mother been a lawfully wedded wife, they would have ranked next to Prince Chonda. But she was a poor carpenter's daughter, and their place was therefore below the "nobles of the second class." The brothers were keenly sensitive to any allusion to their descent from the carpenter, and this was well known to all the courtiers.

Rana Mokul, who had left Chitor to go on an expedition against a clan of freebooters, was one day sitting in a grove of trees, surrounded by his court. Seeing a tree that he did not know, he asked its name of a noble beside him, who, wishing for reasons of his own to mortify Chacha and Maira, professed his ignorance and suggested that the question should be put to them. Unthinking, the Rana turned and asked, "Uncle, what is the name of this tree?"

The insult to the brothers' pride seems as trifling as the offence to Prince Chonda's delicacy, but both had serious consequences for Mokul ; one

gave him the throne of Mewar, the other cost him his life. Chacha and Maira were convinced that the Rana had deliberately chosen to shame them before his court, and they were not slow to pay off the score. The sun had not gone down ere the Rana, kneeling at his prayers, was hacked in pieces by his uncles, who then took horse and galloped to Chitor, thinking to surprise the town. But the warders of Chitor were more alert than in the days of Mokul's childhood, and the brothers found the gates shut against them.

Everywhere was amazement and terror at this sudden stroke. Mokul, although he had not been very many years on the throne, had shown himself a wise and strong ruler, whether in beating back invasion, or in strengthening his borders, and his heir, Prince Kumbho, was still a youth. The new Rana, however, displayed the readiness and foresight which in after years were to make him one of the greatest rulers that Mewar had ever known; at once he sent messengers to his father's ancient foe, Joda, Rao of Marwar, asking for his help.

Joda responded at once and generously. He sent a force under his son's command to avenge his kinsman, and the murderers were hunted from place to place. Not daring to stand in open fight, they fled further and further among the hills, until they came to Ratakote, a fortress on a mountain peak not far from where now stands Udaipur. Here they stayed, strengthened their defences, and prepared themselves to wait events, believing that the castle was impregnable, and that Mewar Rana

and Marwar Rao would be called elsewhere, long ere they could storm those walls.

Kumbho and the Marwar prince, who were hard on the brothers' track, were making their way among the passes of the hills when they were met by a man, who flung himself on the ground before them, and cried aloud for justice. Bidden to tell his story, he said that his name was Soojah, of the Chohan clan, and that he was the father of a fair daughter. In one of their forays among the hills, Chacha and Maira had seen the damsel, and had seized her and carried her off to Ratakote, to do with her according to their will.

Kumbho and his ally sat on their horses listening to Soojah, while with covered face he told of his dishonour. He was on his way even now, he said, to the Rana's court, but seeing them in the distance, he had thought they might help him more speedily to vengeance. He could tell them that the fastness of Ratakote was not impregnable as it seemed; disguising himself as a workman, he had laboured with those who were rebuilding the walls. The crags were steep, the climb was dangerous, perhaps desperate; but on one side he had found it possible to scale the hill, and once on a level with the ramparts the work was more than half done, since the garrison trusted to their natural defences.

Would he show them the way up the hill? Aye, that would he. So a band of men was chosen, and covered by the night, they mustered at the foot of the peak. Soojah climbed first, to

show the way, and was followed by the Marwar prince.

Dark and wild was the night; the thunder crashed and rolled overhead, the rain drenched them to the skin, but on they climbed, where it seemed none but the wild goat might spring or the eagle perch, making use of the uneven places in the crag, and holding on wheresoever they could. No one might speak, to ask for help or to give direction; a word, a stumble, the roll of a pebble beneath their feet, and the sentries on the walls above might take the alarm.

They were half-way up the face of the crag, when Soojah, about to set his foot on a rocky ledge, saw two balls of light just on the level of his head; there crouched a tigress, waiting to spring. But the father was long past caring for anything save the stain upon his house; were it tigress, or demon of the mountains in that shape, he was not to be turned from the path. He touched the prince's hand, as a signal of danger; the prince looked up, saw those flaming eyeballs, and thrust his dagger into her side with so true an aim that the great beast quivered and rolled over, dead.

The daughter of Chacha, lying in the fortress, heard a rolling, rattling sound, and called in terror on her father that their foes were at hand. "Be still, my child," he answered, "'tis only thunder and the lashing rain; our enemies are many miles away; sleep and fear God alone." Little did he know that the noise was caused by one of the

avenging band, who as he swung himself on to the ramparts, fell upon the drum that he carried.

A few moments, and the alarm was given. The garrison struggled to their arms, but all in vain. The Marwar prince cut down Maira; Soojah wiped out his disgrace in Chacha's blood. Thus at the same time was avenged the murder of a crowned king, and the dishonour of a poor village girl.

Having seen justice done upon his father's murderers, Kumbho set himself to reign. Delhi at that period had not recovered from Timur's invasion; her kings were puppets, governed by their own slaves, and everywhere the provinces which Ala-ad-din had conquered were splitting off from the empire and setting up an independent ruler. The line of chiefs known as "the Kings of the East" had been established at Jaunpur, ruling over what was later known as the kingdom of Oudh, and to them some of the Hindu rajas sent the tributary elephants that they had been used to pay to Delhi. A renegade Rajput to whom Gujarat had been given as a gift by the Emperor Firoz Shah, soon threw off his allegiance to Delhi, and became the first of the warrior kings of Gujarat. The Deccan was also an independent kingdom, broken loose from the empire many years before, and Malwa, once a Hindu kingdom, was now changed from a province of Delhi to a powerful independent state under a Muslim ruler, Mahmud.

Mahmud hoped to carve an empire for himself

from the ruins of Delhi, and attacked his neighbours one by one. He defeated both Jaunpur and the Deccan, adding portions of their territory to Malwa ; he seized upon Ajmer, the great stronghold, said to be the key of Rajast'han, and then allying himself with his defeated foe of Gujarat, he invaded Mewar.

Kumbho Rana was ready for them. With a hundred thousand horse and foot and fourteen hundred elephants he crashed down upon the plains of Malwa and met the two kings in battle. The day ended in total defeat for the Muslim ; the combined armies were routed, and Mahmud himself was carried captive back to Chitor.

For six months the Raja of Malwa remained a prisoner behind those vast walls, cursing the day on which he set foot on Rajput ground. Then Kumbho released him, exacting neither ransom nor tribute, and heaping him with gifts. His crown was left in the royal treasury at Chitor, hereafter to become the prize of a greater conqueror. It seems as if the generosity with which Mahmud had been treated had some effect upon him, as after his release he joined forces with the Rana, and they inflicted a crushing defeat on the imperial troops.

In token of his victory over Malwa, Rana Kumbho set up the Pillar of Victory, which is still the crowning glory of Chitor. None who have not seen it can imagine its like, and those who have seen it are unable to describe it. It is possible to take refuge in bare facts, and stolidly

to repeat that the pillar was ten years in building, that it is 122 feet high, that each of its faces is 35 feet broad at the base, and over 17 feet broad at the summit beneath the cupola that crowns the whole. Moreover, the materials are limestone and quartz that here and there have taken a polish as of jasper; it has nine distinct storeys, with openings at every face of each storey, and around the vaulted chamber at the summit are black marble slabs that once contained the whole genealogy of the Ranas of Chitor. All this is definite, and totally unprofitable. No words can paint that wild riot of carven imagery—dancing women, monsters, sacred emblems, that writhe and leap and intertwine from base to summit. Above the dead city "the ringlet on the brow of Chitor" still looks out across the plain, "sparkling like the rays of the rising sun, rising like the bridegroom of the land," as in the days when, "in the midst of the armies of his foe, Kumbho was as a tiger, or as a flame in a dry forest."

Many of the other buildings in Chitor were raised by Kumbho's orders. He dedicated a temple to Krishna, and another to Brahma, in memory of his murdered father, Rana Mokul. He built a great temple on Mount Abu, and another, now abandoned to the wild beasts, among the western hills of Mewar.

But he did not trust to the gods alone for the defence of his country. Everywhere he raised fortresses and citadels, or strengthened those that were already in existence. Chief of these was

Komulmer, "the hill of Kumbho," now remembered as the dwelling-place of his heroic grandson, Pirthi Raj. In the intervals of his labours he amused himself with composing poetry, and wrote hymns in praise of Krishna.

His principal wife, Meera Bhai, was also a poet and a devotee of Krishna, in whose honour she raised a temple at Chitor, and to whose shrines she made continual pilgrimages. Nay, she was so carried away by her religious enthusiasm that she danced before his altars as if she had been one of the nautch-girls in the service of his temple. Some were scandalised to see a queen thus forget her rank and dignity, and some said that it was not only to say her prayers that Meera Bhai travelled up and down the length and breadth of Hindustan. But a legend tells that Krishna himself approved her devotion, and that when the hour appointed for her death was at hand he descended from his altar as she danced before him, held her in his arms, and drew out her life with a kiss.[1]

A wife who was always either writing hymns to the gods or faring on pilgrimage cannot have been altogether satisfactory to her husband, and perhaps it was Meera Bhai's poetical and religious fervour that drove Kumbho to an action that was unworthy of his fame. The daughter of the chief of Jhalawar had been betrothed to a prince of Marwar, when Kumbho, forgetting all that he owed to his mother's kin, descended upon the bride, bore her

[1] There is still in North-Western India a small religious sect said to have been founded by Meera Bhai.

off to his fortress of Komulmer, and married her sorely against her will.

The action was unwise, as it renewed the old quarrel between Mewar and Marwar, and it brought nothing but trouble to Kumbho, for the new wife loathed him, and would only pine for her rightful bridegroom. Night after night, we are told, a lamp would 'shine from the highest turret of Komulmer, a sign to the prince who was eating out his heart in Mundore that his betrothed waited for him to deliver her; and time after time did the lover respond to her signal without being able to reach her chamber. Once, having made his way through the forest, he had nearly scaled the walls and surprised the garrison, but all was in vain; he never regained his bride.

Kumbho's eldest son and heir-apparent was Prince Raemul, who brought trouble upon himself and his father by his love of asking questions. The Rana never sat down without waving his sword three times above his head, and murmuring some strange words. After burning with curiosity for a long time, Raemul could not keep silence, and he expressed a wish to know the meaning of this ceremony. The Rana promptly replied by banishing him from Chitor.

While Raemul was in exile, after fifty years of a glorious reign, Rana Kumbho was stabbed by a charun, suborned by one of his own sons.

Having rid himself of his father, the prince usurped the throne, and for five years he ruled Mewar, at a heavy cost. He bribed his neigh-

bours right and left with towns or districts, in the hope of being allowed to remain in the place that he had won by so foul a crime. When Raemul came back to seek his own at the head of an army, the usurper, defeated and terror-stricken, fled to Delhi to ask for the protection of Buhlol, the first of the Lodi sultans, who had begun to show himself of different mettle to the shadow-kings who had preceded him. Mewar should be vassal of Delhi, vowed the Rana, and he, the chief of the sunborn, would give his daughter to Buhlol for wife ; only let him be safe from his brother, who would not be content so long as he lived. Buhlol heard the recreant, and graciously dismissed him ; but the gods heard also, and would not suffer that a daughter of the line of Bappa Rawul should be wedded to a cow-slaying infidel. As the Rana was leaving the presence chamber, a flash of lightning seemed to play about him. He fell where he stood, and when the terrified attendants ventured near, they beheld a blackened, twisted corpse. On the list of Mewar's kings, after the name of Kumbho, comes "Hatiaro," "the murderer." No other name is ever given to the great Rana's unworthy son. Glad were all men to lay him in the grave, and to welcome Kumbho's rightful successor, Rana Raemul.

THE ADVENTURES OF PIRTHI RAJ

RAEMUL RANA of Mewar had three sons, Sanga, Pirthi Raj, and Jeimul, and Pirthi Raj was the most fearless and adventurous of the three. From the time that he was fourteen years old he spent his life in feats of arms, never caring to reckon the odds against him. His name was a byword in all the countryside for courage and daring, and many hundred years after his early death his brave deeds were still remembered.

Knowing his own strength as he did, he longed to lead the sons of Mewar to battle against the Mahommedan invaders, their hereditary foes, and he often declared that fate meant him to rule Mewar rather than his elder brother, Sanga, who was more prudent and wary than himself.

Once he was talking in this way in the presence of his brothers and their uncle, Soorajmul, when Sanga said: "Brother, let the gods decide between us. Although I am the eldest born, I am ready to forego my rights if it is so decreed. At the Tiger's Mount dwells the priestess of Charuni-Devi; we will go and ask her who shall be lord of the ten thousand towns of Mewar after our father's death."

The brothers agreed, and they journeyed together to the Tiger's Mount, their uncle going with them. When they reached the cell of the priestess it was empty, so they prepared to await her return. Pirthi Raj and Jeimul sat down upon her bed, but Sanga flung himself upon a panther's skin on the floor, and Soorajmul sat beside him, with one knee upon the skin.

When the priestess entered the cell, Pirthi Raj, who always took the lead, told her for what purpose they had come to her. She turned to Sanga. "The panther's skin is the ancient throne of princes," she cried; "as thou dost sit on the panther's skin now, so, in days to come, shalt thou sit upon the throne of Mewar. And for thee," she said to Soorajmul, "there shall be lordship and dominion, after many toils and wanderings, and a strong ground for a dwelling in the place where thou shalt find a mother defending her young from an enemy."

In a blind passion of wrath Pirthi Raj drew his sword, and would have slain his brother there and then if Soorajmul had not stepped between them. The priestess fled in terror, believing that she would be killed by one or other of them, and her narrow cell echoed to the clash of arms and the murmurs of strife.

Far away from the Tiger's Mount there was a very holy sanctuary, and beside its portals the Rahtore Beeda of the Ondawut clan was standing, with his horse ready saddled and bridled for a journey, when a breathless fugitive rode

up to him. The horse was exhausted, the rider was bleeding from five sword-cuts, and had lost one eye from an arrow wound. "I am Sanga, son of Raemul Rana; my brothers would slay me." The Rahtore helped him from his horse, and, even as he lighted down, a cloud of dust upon the horizon showed that horsemen were following hard upon his track. "It is my brother, Jeimul. Pirthi Raj and Soorajmul lie exhausted with their wounds, but Jeimul seeks after my life to destroy it." "Have no fear," spake the Rahtore; "I will defend the sanctuary whilst you make your escape."

Jeimul and his horsemen now clattered up to the door, and demanded that Sanga should be given over to them. "He is my guest," answered the Rahtore. "Then let us seek for him." "Nay," answered the Rahtore, drawing his sword. Alone he withstood Jeimul and his men, and when he fell beneath their blows, and they forced an entrance over his dead body, there was no sign within of him whom they sought. Sanga had again escaped his foes.

Tidings of all this came to the ears of the Rana, and he upbraided Pirthi Raj. "You have almost cost me the life of my heir, and now he wanders among the hills, and dares not return to his rightful place because of you. Get you gone, and live by strife, since you love it so well."

As soon as his wounds were healed, Pirthi Raj asked for nothing better than to obey his father's commands. Like the northern Vikings, the Rajput

youths were generally turned out into the world to shift for themselves as soon as they grew old enough to be troublesome at home. Rana Raemul himself had been banished for asking an impertinent question of his father, the great Rana Kumbho. So Pirthi Raj took his arms and his horse, and attended only by five followers, went to seek his fortunes, resolved not to return until he should have made his name honoured by some great deed.

There was a province called Godwar which in former days had been conquered from its owners, the Meenas, and ruled by Mewar. In the disastrous reign of Raemul's brother it had revolted, and Raemul had never been able to bring it to order. It was swept from end to end by bands of reivers from the hills, and although a Meena now dared to call himself Lord of Godwar, and even forced Rajputs to serve him, he had done nothing to check the robbery and pillage that desolated what once had been a fair land.

Pirthi Raj determined to win back Godwar for his father, and he pressed on to the chief town, hoping to hear of some means whereby he might accomplish this end. His money was all spent, his followers were as poor as he, and the only way in which he could pay for food and a night's lodging for them all, was to pledge a valuable ring which he wore.

Now it happened that the merchant to whom he offered it was one of the name of Ojah, from whom he had bought it in former days, and Ojah

at once recognised both the ring and the prince. Pirthi Raj confided to him with what purpose he had come to Godwar, and was told by the merchant that it would be easy to overthrow the Meena chief by using stratagem.

Acting on Ojah's advice, Pirthi Raj, concealing his name and rank, took service under the Meena, with his five followers. To all appearance he was a loyal soldier, and on the great holiday, when all the Meena's bodyguard were allowed to go home and see their families, Pirthi Raj had no difficulty in getting leave of absence with the rest of them. But he left his five Rajputs behind in the chief's castle, and as soon as he had passed the town gates, he hid himself among the trees beside the road and waited.

Ere long he heard a horse galloping wildly from the town, and the Meena chief tore past him. Pirthi Raj, who had planned all with Ojah, knew what had happened ; the five Rajputs had attacked the Meena, and the chief, left without his guards, was fleeing to the mountains. A thrust from Pirthi Raj's lance put an end to the Meena's flight, and then, having set the town on fire, the Rajputs cut down all who tried to escape the flames.

In this way Pirthi Raj made himself master of nearly all the principal towns of Godwar. When he had pacified the country, he appointed Ojah to govern it in the name of the Rana, and looked about him for more adventures. He loved better to hear the lark sing than the mouse squeak, and he had no mind to stay quietly behind the walls of

a town when there was a chance of winning renown elsewhere.

There was at that time in Bednore, in the Rana's dominions, an exiled prince who had been driven from his city of Thoda by Lilla, an Afghan invader. He had fled to Mewar, since he was of Rajput blood, and there bided his time, hoping to regain Thoda. But hitherto all his attempts had failed, although every expedition that had set forth to wrest Thoda from its new master had been heartened by the presence of the Raja's daughter, Tara Bhai.[1] Scorning to live behind the purdah, to weave, to embroider, and to cook, she had learned —as did many noble ladies of the Rajputs—to fling a lance, to bend a bow, to wield a sword, to tame a mettlesome war-steed, and to ride with an army to battle. Well was she named, for she was as a star for beauty and wisdom amongst other women.

When Jeimul, the Rana's son, sent to ask her in marriage, her father left the answer to her; and she sent word to the prince: "My hand is for him who shall restore Thoda to my father."

Jeimul vowed to conquer Thoda, and trusting in his faith the old raja allowed him to come to Bednore, and to see Tara Bhai. But whether he was drunk with the opium which all Rajputs use, or whether the gods had made him mad, he offered such a grievous insult to the princess that her father drew his sword and slew him where he stood.

[1] The Star Lady.

When the tidings came to the Rana's court, there were many who urged that Jeimul's death should be avenged upon the exiled king. "Not so," answered the Rana; "he who could thus insult a father—and that father homeless and in distress — deserved to die. From this time the lands of Bednore are given to the slayer of my son."

News of his brother's death, and of Tara's vow, came to Pirthi Raj in Godwar. At once he set forth for Bednore, and on his arrival asked the hand of the princess.

"Will you restore Thoda to my father?" she asked.

"On the faith of a Rajput, I will restore it," he answered.

"So be it," she said, and they were married at once.

It was the day upon which all the orthodox among the Moslem bewail the children of Ali, martyred at Kerbela. The bier was duly placed in the centre of the great square of Thoda, and the people crowded about it. From his balcony the Afghan governor looked down upon the throng as he put on his robes before joining the procession, and saw three pilgrims in strange garb standing beside the bier. "Who are those three men?" he asked; but ere the words had left his mouth, the twang of a bowstring and the hiss of a lance sounded among the dirges of the mourners, and he fell lifeless upon the floor of the balcony. The three strange pilgrims were Tara Bhai, her bride-

groom, and one of the trusty five who accompanied him in all his adventures.

Upon the instant all was confusion. The crowd fled hither and thither, and the three made their way through the swaying, shrieking mass to the city gates. Here an elephant stopped the way, but Tara's sword gleamed in the air, and the poor beast turned aside, with its trunk shorn off. The Afghans poured out of the gates, a raging disorderly throng, in pursuit of the strangers—only to find the Rajput cavalry drawn up in battle array outside the city. Panic-stricken, without a leader, taken completely by surprise, they were pierced by Rajput lances, cloven by Rajput swords, or trodden down like the grass beneath the hoofs of Rajput steeds. Few saved themselves by flight. The crescent was torn down from the walls of Thoda, and Tara Bhai's vow was fulfilled.

Hearing of this disgrace to the forces of Islam, the Mahommedan governor of Ajmer prepared to attack Pirthi Raj. But Pirthi Raj had no intention of waiting until he was attacked. He made a hurried march from Thoda, and threw himself upon the enemy at the dawn of day. At nightfall he sat in the citadel, master of Ajmer.

All these exploits touched his father's heart. The old Rana was very lonely: Jeimul was dead, dishonoured; Sanga, lurking no man knew where. Pirthi Raj was practically the only son left to him, and he recalled him to Mewar.

Pirthi Raj was willing to be reconciled to his father, but he had no wish to live inactively and

luxuriously in any of the fair palaces beside the lake of Chitor. He went to the west border of Mewar, to the hill fortress of Komulmer, the ruins of which still remain to give an idea of what it was in the days when "the Star Lady" and her husband held their court within its barriers. "A massive wall with numerous towers and pierced battlements, having a strong resemblance to the Etruscan, encloses a space of some miles extent below, while the pinnacle rises, like the crown of the Hindu Cybele, tier above tier of battlements, to the summit, which is crowned with the 'cloud-palace' of the Ranas."

Here Pirthi Raj dwelt for some years, living a life like that of the old "wardens of the marches," breaking up gangs of robbers, and dispensing rough justice. The Rajputs flocked to his banner from all parts of the country; "their swords shone in the heavens, and were dreaded on the earth; but they aided the defenceless."

It was not always a desire to help the unprotected, or to redress a wrong, that led Pirthi Raj and his merry men to risk their lives. The story is still told that he went to Chitor, and found the old Rana with an officer in the service of Malwa. All the prince's royal blood boiled to hear his father chatting in a pleasant and familiar manner with this man, and when the officer had left the presence, Pirthi Raj took the Rana to task for showing too much condescension. "'Tis well for you," rejoined his father; "every one knows that you are a mighty seizer of kings; but I prefer to

live in peace with my neighbours, and retain my lands."

Pirthi Raj made no reply in words to his father, but, gathering a few followers, immediately invaded Malwa. This was too much for the patience of the Raja of Malwa, who took the field against him at the head of a large army, with all his train of dancing-girls, eunuchs, and other attendants. He was resting after a march, surrounded by all these appendages of royalty, when a sudden uproar arose without his tent. A band of horsemen had suddenly appeared in the camp, and were spurring towards him. Taken by surprise, the forces of Malwa made no attempt to stay them, and Pirthi Raj swooped down upon the royal tent, caught up the Raja, and bore him off from the midst of his army.

When they had recovered from their surprise, the Malwa troops mounted and hurried in pursuit. But as soon as they were within shooting distance of the swift camel that was bearing the Raja, Pirthi Raj warned them to come no nearer. The least attempt at a rescue, he said, and he would stab his prisoner to the heart. But they need have no fear for their lord; he was being taken "to touch the feet" of the Rana, after which he would be set free.

The old Rana sat within his palace at Chitor, when Pirthi Raj once more dashed into his presence, haling with him a bewildered and reluctant captive. "Send for your friend," cried the prince joyously, when the Rana began to ask

questions, "let him tell you whom I have here." And when the officer arrived upon the scene, what was his dismay and astonishment to recognise his master, the Raja of Malwa.

For some days the prisoner was kept at Chitor, and treated as an honoured guest; then, having paid his ransom in horses, he was allowed to return to Malwa, while Pirthi Raj, having triumphed over his father, rode back to Komulmer.

Such a feat was a mere holiday excursion for Pirthi Raj, undertaken in boyish lightness of heart, from love of adventure. He had a different task before him when his uncle, Soorajmul, broke out in rebellion. That worthy had never forgotten the words of the priestess, that for him there should be lordship and dominion, and as the prophecy seemed slow to be fulfilled, he took up arms to hasten it. Sarungdeo, a kinsman of the Rana, turned traitor to his liege lord and joined Soorajmul, and the two, with assistance from Malwa, ravaged and pillaged until they had possessed themselves of a goodly portion of the land. The Rana led out his troops, and they met in a pitched battle, in which the Rana, fighting as a common soldier, received two and twenty wounds. The loyalist forces would have been routed had not Pirthi Raj galloped up in the nick of time, with a thousand men, and saved them from utter defeat.

Neither side would leave the battlefield, scorning to yield an inch of ground. The foes lay down on their arms all night, each in sight of the other's watchfires, and sullenly waited for the dawn to

renew the fight; but Pirthi Raj carelessly strolled over to the opposite camp, and walked into his uncle's tent just as Soorajmul was lying down on his couch, after submitting to the ministrations of the barber who had been sewing up his wounds. The patient started up at the sight of his nephew with such energy that the wounds broke out afresh; Pirthi Raj smiled upon him reassuringly, and inquired after his health.

"Quite well, my child, since I have had the pleasure of seeing you," was the reply of the uncle, who received the visit in the same spirit in which it was made; whereupon Pirthi Raj complained that he had been in such haste to inquire after his uncle that he had allowed himself no time to pay his respects to his father, or to get any dinner, and begged Soorajmul to give him something to eat. Food accordingly was brought, and the two who had been seeking each other's life all day, sat side by side, and ate from the same plate.

"You and I will end our battle in the morning, uncle," said Pirthi Raj, as he rose to go; and his uncle replied, "Very well, child; come early."

Next day, the fight began again, and Pirthi Raj as usual was victorious. Soorajmul and Sarungdeo were driven to flight. After many skirmishes and many hurried retreats, always worsted by the younger man, they took refuge in the depths of a forest. Here they built a stockade, and were resting beside their fire one night, thinking that their traces were lost, when the clash of arms resounded

in the stillness. "This must be my nephew," cried Soorajmul, as he caught up his weapons, and as he spoke Pirthi Raj leaped into their midst. A single blow from the youth's sword had nearly overcome Soorajmul when Sarungdeo flung himself between uncle and nephew, pleading Soorajmul's exhausted condition—"A buffet now is more than a score of blows in former days." "Only from my nephew's hand," interposed Soorajmul, who would yield to none but the young kinsman, whom he loved in spite of their quarrel. "Stay the fight, nephew. If I am slain, it matters not—my children are Rajputs, and they will find supporters; but if you are slain, what will become of Chitor? I shall be shamed for ever."

Pirthi Raj, struck by this appeal, commanded his followers to put up their weapons. Uncle and nephew embraced, and the opposing forces sat down peaceably, side by side.

"What were you doing, uncle, when I came?" asked Pirthi Raj.

"Only talking nonsense, child, after dinner."

"But with me hard upon your track, how could you be so careless?"

"What could I do?" asked the harassed uncle; "you had left me no resource, and I must have some place to rest my head."

Next morning Pirthi Raj suggested that his uncle should go with him to offer sacrifice to Bhavani, whose temple was not far from the stockade. Whether he suspected something, or whether the old warrior's strength was broken by

the fighting, the wounds, the headlong flights, and the "excursions and alarums" of the last few months, Soorajmul declared that the blow received on the previous night made him unable to offer sacrifice; Sarungdeo might go in his stead. The astute chief must have congratulated himself on his shrewdness when terror-stricken witnesses rushed back to tell him what had taken place before Bhavani's shrine; Pirthi Raj, like Bruce in the church of the Grey Friars, had turned upon the traitor at his side. After a fierce struggle Sarungdeo's head was laid upon the altar of Bhavani as the most fitting offering for her who in legendary ages had girt the founder of Mewar's line of kings with his consecrated sword.

Once more Soorajmul was driven to take horse and ride for his life. He fled to the lands that he had conquered for a short time from the Rana, to the district of Sadri. "If I may not keep it," he swore, "it shall be for those who are stronger than the King," and he gave it to the Brahmins, with whom it remained, despite the indignation of the Rana, since any one taking it from them would be doomed to spend sixty thousand years in hell.

Then Soorajmul went southward, over the border, and left Mewar for ever. He wandered up and down, until in a wild and desolate region he saw a she-goat defending her kid from a wolf. Remembering the prophecy heard at the Tiger's Mount, he stayed here, subdued the tribes about him, and built the town and fortress of Deola, where he ended his days. An exile, he still loved

the land where he had passed his youth, and did not suffer his sons to forget the ties that bound them to Mewar; in the hour of Chitor's sorest peril, when the cowardly Rana shrank from meeting death after the custom of his race, it was a chief of Deola who gave himself in the hope of driving Akbar from the royal city.

Having rid himself of his uncle, Pirthi Raj was not content. He heard that his brother, Sanga, who had long been hiding from his wrath, was alive, and about to be married. Pirthi Raj remembered the prophecy as well as did his uncle, and he was about to start in pursuit of Sanga when a pitiful entreaty from his sister turned his vengeance to another quarter.

The princess of Mewar had been given by her father to the prince of Sirohi, with Mount Abu as her dowry. Although she had every right to expect kind treatment from her husband, her married life had been wretched. The prince "drank opium"—a weakness so common with the Rajputs that she could not have objected to it, had it not been his custom, when intoxicated, to drag her out of bed and leave her to pass the night on the floor beneath the bedstead. This last indignity was more than the princess could endure, and she made a passionate appeal to be taken home by her father.

The Sirohi prince lay on his bed in a drunken sleep; his wife lay on the floor, distraught with shame and grief, when a tall figure stood at the bedside. It was Pirthi Raj, who had scaled the

palace walls at midnight to avenge his sister's wrongs. Unhappily the princess relented when she saw the dagger at her husband's throat—perhaps she thought of the flames which then consumed Rajput widows of royal blood—and the Sirohi prince, awake and sobered by fright, was granted his life on condition of placing his wife's shoes upon his head and touching her feet —the worst humiliation that can befall an Indian husband.

When the penance was performed, Pirthi Raj embraced his brother-in-law, and behaved with his usual friendliness towards a worsted foe. He even consented to stay as a guest in the halls that he had entered by stealth, and for several days he was royally entertained. The two princes now seemed on the best possible terms, and when Pirthi Raj mounted his horse to ride back to Komulmer, the Sirohi prince pressed upon him, as a parting gift, some sweetmeats for which Sirohi was renowned.

Pirthi Raj took them, thinking no evil, with the carelessness with which he had taken food and *pan* from the hands of his uncle after their sore fight on the plain near Chitor. But as he came within sight of Komulmer he "felt his heartstrings fail." On the brow of the mountain overlooking the pass he halted, and sent for Tara Bhai, since he could go no further. Vainly he strained his dying eyes towards the citadel, as he lay beside the temple of Mama-Devi, the "Mother of the Gods," that still marks the spot; before his wife

could reach his side the poison had done its work.

At Tara's command, the funeral pyre was raised, and while the heartbroken warriors whom she and her husband had often led to victory stood around it, she climbed "to the bridal bed by her master's side," and thus, as all believed, won heaven for herself and him. Nearly three hundred years afterwards, when Colonel Tod visited Komulmer, a little shrine opposite the Temple of the Mother of the Gods held the ashes of Pirthi Raj, and "the Star of Bednore."

THE STORY OF RANA SANGA

IN an obscure corner of Mewar, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, there lived a family of poor peasants. They were part of a little community, whose wealth consisted in a herd of goats and a few cattle, their cooking-pots, and the garments that they wore. In spite of their poverty, there were some who lacked even more than they did, and the headman one day announced that he had found a young man wandering in the village, ill-clad and half-starving, who wished to earn an honest livelihood; they could well do with some one else to tend the cattle, and he had engaged the stranger as herdsman.

The good wife snorted in contempt. Charity to Brahmins or to beggars was pleasing to the gods, but why should they trouble themselves to find work for strangers? There were many evil-doers roaming the country, and who could tell what might have brought the young man to their door? Moreover, it was not every one who could herd buffaloes; the children, who had been used to it from babyhood, could do as they pleased, but neither bulls nor cows would let a stranger come near them.

The good wife's predictions were fated to come

true; the great savage brutes, who would let themselves be driven hither and thither at the will of a child who could scarcely walk, broke loose from the new herdsman. In a few days he was dismissed from his post as being too stupid to look after buffaloes, and told to make himself useful about the house.

Here, however, he fared no better. When told to watch the unleavened cakes of bread that were baking on the hearth, he forgot his orders, and the cakes were burned to ashes.

Great was the wrath of the good wife, and of all the household, who saw the day's food wasted through the carelessness of an idle fellow. He was a lazy, good-for-nothing loon, who could open his mouth to eat cakes when they were baked, but could not open his one eye to see if they were burning. Let him go where he would, he was useless to them.

The stranger heard all these reproaches in silence, and left the peasant's hut. He did not look like an idle drone, although he had failed as a herdsman and as a cook. He was not tall, but very strongly built, with a frame that seemed made for activity and for endurance. His clothes were the poorest that could be found, and he carried none of the arms without which a man of Rajput blood would never be seen abroad, yet his complexion was unusually fair for one of peasant birth.

Sanga had wandered far in his journey from the sanctuary where the brave chieftain had died to cover his flight. He had hoped that among

the goatherds he might be safe from his brother, since none would look for the Rana's son in a peasant's hovel. But the goatherds had cast him out, and whither should he go, without food, without arms, and without friends, in an inhospitable land?

As the poor prince was wandering to and fro, some horsemen passed him, and suddenly dismounting, flung themselves at his feet. No one who had seen those large prominent eyes, albeit the sight of one was now destroyed by a wound, could forget him, and the Rajputs paid homage to their king that was to be. They would keep his secret, since his life was not safe if Pirthi Raj should learn his whereabouts; but they would never leave him. They were in the service of the chief of Srinuggur, the leader of a band of marauders who harried the countryside; let Sanga offer himself to the chief, and they would provide him with a horse and arms.

No better choice was to be had; and Sanga was enrolled among the chieftain's men, and rode for many months on his forays, the trusty Rajputs always at his side to ward off danger or to render service.

After a long and wearing ride, it happened that the lord of Srinuggur and his men one day halted beneath a spreading banyan tree, for the noon-day meal. Sanga had no need to attempt cookery in which he had once failed so wofully; while his Rajputs lit the fire and busied themselves with the food, he lay down to rest in the shade. When

the meal was ready, the men brought it to him. Sanga was asleep, his dagger beneath his head, where he had placed it on lying down. But a great snake had crept from its hole in the roots of the banyan, and was waving its crest to and fro above his head, and on the serpent had lighted a little black and white bird which was chattering loudly. A passing goatherd had stopped on seeing the group, and was staring open-mouthed.

As the Rajputs advanced, Sanga opened his eyes, and at the same moment the goatherd prostrated himself to the ground. "Hail! hail!" he cried, in awe and wonder, "hail to him who shall sit upon the throne of kings."

Sanga shook him off, declaring himself to be nothing but a poor soldier of fortune, in the band of the Srinuggur chief; the goatherd persisted that he knew the language of birds and beasts, and that serpent and bird alike had proclaimed the sleeper's royal blood. Sanga still denied his birth, and the goatherd went away. As he passed the chieftain, however, he hinted that the new recruit was more than he seemed to be. The chieftain sent for Sanga, and having at last induced him to own the truth, promised him his daughter in marriage, and support against his brothers.

Jeimul by this time had come to a dishonourable end, but Pirthi Raj was at the height of his power. Such a startling piece of news as that the Rana's heir was with the Srinuggur chieftain, and about to wed his daughter, could not be kept secret, and Pirthi Raj prepared to give chase to

his brother. Ere he could set forth from Komulmer, his sister called on him for help, as has been told elsewhere, and he never returned to the mountain fortress in which he had spent the last years of an adventurous life.

Soon after the death of Pirthi Raj, his father, Rana Raemul, broken-hearted and outwearied, passed from a life that had been full of cares and troubles, although, as men count success, he had been successful and prosperous. He had undone much of the evil wrought by his brother's reign, and under him Mewar had lost nothing if she had gained little. Kindly, honest, well-meaning, and —for a Rajput—pacific, he was not one to leave his mark on history, and he was quite unable to control his sons; yet Mewar has grieved for the loss of many a worse Rana.

Of a different type from his father was Sanga —or, as he is sometimes called, Singram—"the lion of battle," who now came to the throne, fulfilling the oracle of the Tiger's Mount and the prophecy of the goatherd. Not only Rajast'han, but the surrounding countries soon learned that a ruler had risen before whom all must bow the head. Marwar, Amber, Ajmer, Boondi, and other Hindu states such as Gwalior and Kalpi, mustered to battle at his call. "From the Malwa plain to the Abu scars" he was lord paramount. He led his confederate forces in eighteen pitched battles against the Muslim rulers of Delhi and Malwa; the former was defeated with great slaughter, and the latter, another Mahmud, owned himself as

completely worsted by Sanga, as his predecessor and namesake had been by Sanga's grandfather, Rana Kumbho. The boundaries of Mewar were extended on all sides, the northern limit being a stream called "the yellow rivulet," which flows near the hill fortress of Biana.

Legend told the secret of the means by which Sanga became the most powerful of the Mewar Ranas. Once, 'tis said, a certain Deoji—an incarnation of one of the lesser gods—was passing through the land on his way to avenge an old wrong, and came to Chitor. Sanga recognised the incarnate god, and received him with all honour. At parting the Deoji gave his host a very precious talisman wrapped in a little bag, which was to be hung with a string about his neck. So long as the bag lay upon the Rana's breast, he should have victory over his enemies; but if ever the day should come when, through carelessness or accident, it should slip to his back, let him look to himself, for his evil fate was at hand. In token that his words were true, the Deoji gave the Rana a peacock's feather. "Go forth," he said, "and touch with this all who are lying dead in the city, and they shall live and stand upon their feet again." The Rana walked through Chitor, touching every corpse, and as he passed, each rose to life. Then he knew that the Deoji's words were true, and built in his courtyard a little temple to the incarnate god, which stood long after Sanga was dust and the fruit of his victories had perished.

The sacred talisman availed against Rajput chief-

tain and Muslim king for many years ; and Sanga, as he pressed his conquests further and further, guessed not that one was at hand who should overturn the old order, before whom even the star of the "Lion of War" should pale and grow dim. Sultan Ibrahim now sat upon the throne of Delhi, a cruel and haughty monarch, whose pride had alienated all his chief nobles. The country was seething with revolt, and after several outbreaks had been severely repressed, the Sultan's uncle fled northwards to Kabul to invite King Babar to give his help to Ibrahim's disaffected subjects.

Had they known it, the rebellious nobles were changing the whole course of the history of India, perhaps of the history of the world. Had not the helpless condition of Delhi promised an easy victory to Babar, the Rajput, and not the Moghul, might had have the ascendency in north-western India. Babar had long coveted the spoils of Hindustan, and in his veins flowed the blood of Chinghiz Khan the Mongol, and Timur the Tatar, who had shown the way for all succeeding generations of northern invaders. A raid into the Punjab had given him no permanent increase of territory, though it may have sharpened the desire of his soldiers for luxuries, such as never reached their little kingdom among the hills. Five years later, with the Delhi prince at his side, he began the campaign against the Imperial troops. Down from the hills, through the Punjab, he pressed towards Delhi, putting to flight army after army as he went. On the great plain of Panipat—the name of which

is connected with so many events in Indian history —he met Sultan Ibrahim and his hundred thousand men. "The sun had mounted spear-high when the onset began," writes Babar in his memoirs; "and the battle lasted till midday, when the enemy were completely broken and routed, and my people victorious and triumphant." Ibrahim was a headless corpse upon the field, and at Delhi prayer was said in the mosques in the name of the Emperor Babar.

That the forces of Sultan Ibrahim had failed before those of the King of Kabul was little wonder to the Hindus. Both were heathen and slayers of kine; let the one eat the other, and Rana Sanga should deal with the conqueror. All eyes were turned to the lord of Mewar, who should drive these accursed ones like chaff before the wind, even as he had driven the hosts of Delhi and of Malwa.

Nothing loth, the old lion roused himself for what was to be his last battle, and summoned his meinie. "Eighty thousand horse, seven Rajas of the highest rank, nine Raos, and one hundred and four chieftains bearing the title of Rawul and Rawut, with five hundred war elephants, followed him into the field." His first advance was to Biana, where he laid siege to the fortress; and here it was, says the legend, that while bathing in the "yellow rivulet," he found that the talisman had slipped from his breast to his back, and knew that his doom was coming upon him.

In the meanwhile Babar was hurrying towards

the spot, having sent a detachment of fifteen hundred men in advance to raise the siege of Biana. A straggling remnant came back to him to report that the Rajput was a foe of another type from the mercenary troops of Delhi. On the plain of Kanwaha, where Sanga had lately built a palace to mark what he intended should be the northern boundary of Mewar, Babar encamped his army. The gun-carriages and baggage-waggons, chained together, were arranged so as to cover his front, and where there were no gun-carriages he dug deep trenches, "backed by portable wooden tripods on wheels, lashed together at a few paces apart." Amongst his ordnance was the cannon known as "the victorious gun," which Ustad Ali, his great artillery officer, was hereafter to distinguish himself by firing at the unprecedented rate of sixteen times a day.

In sooth, it was a fine scene if there had been any who could look upon it unconcernedly. On the one side was the hoary warrior whose life had been spent in wars and strife, who had lost an eye and an arm and the use of one leg from his foemen's weapons, whose shattered frame was scarred by eighty honourable wounds. Behind him were the flower of Rajast'han, tried warriors who had stood by him in sport and fray, and ardent youths who burned to win themselves a perpetual name. All had the lofty traditions of the Rajput, the dauntless courage and the unbending pride; all had been taught to woo death as they would woo a maiden bride, and knew that the warrior's last

sleep should be on a couch of the bodies of his slaughtered foes.

On the other side was the invader, a king at the age of eleven, a lifelong exile from his father's home. Twice had he sat himself upon the throne of Samarcand, the goal of his ambition, where his ancestors had ruled; and twice had he been driven thence, a friendless exile, to hide like Sanga with herdsmen, or to wander up and down beguiled with vain hopes, until, still a young man, he took possession of Kabul, and there waited for his star to lead him further. Even now he had not passed middle age,[1] and was in the prime of strength and vigour. With a full-grown man under either arm, he could run round the battlements of a fortress, leaping the embrasures; he lived in the saddle, and made a practice of crossing by swimming every river that he met. A soldier before all things, he was something of a poet, and even his religious enthusiasm did not prevent him from recognising the good qualities of his enemies, for whom a kindly word is continually mingling with his conventional denunciations of "the infidel." Rana Sanga could have been pitted against no braver or more honourable foe.

To either side, it was a holy war. The Rajputs were confident that "Bhavani Mata" would lead them to victory against the men who had cast down her temples and defiled her altars; the Mongols called upon the one God to help them overcome the idolaters. Further, to complete

[1] He was about forty-five.

the picture, Babar was as devoted to the use of opium as Rana Sanga, or as any other Rajput, and took it continually in large quantities.

For a fortnight the armies remained encamped opposite to each other, neither side daring to advance; Babar's men were ill at ease; only a little while ago, in a fit of home-sickness, they had murmured against their emperor, demanding to be led back to their northern hills from these stifling plains. The survivors of the detachment that had been cut to pieces by the Rajputs inspired their fellows with a terror of Rana Sanga's men, and to make matters worse, the astrologer who accompanied Babar's force could utter nothing but prophecies of evil. Mars, he said, was in the west, therefore any one attacking from the opposite quarter was certain to be worsted.

The Rajput historians say, that during this fortnight a negotiation was being carried on between the Emperor and the Rana. Babar knew himself to be alone in a hostile country; should he fail in the coming battle, his enemies would flock around him from every quarter, and not only must he leave the spoils of Delhi, but give up all hope of seeing Kabul again. Sanga was prudent and wary, and his whole life had shown that he was ready to sacrifice his own personal feelings for the good of Mewar. It is very likely that both sides did attempt to come to an understanding, although Babar says nothing of it. The terms he offered were such

as the Rana might well have accepted without hurt to his pride, or to the honour of Mewar. The "yellow rivulet" was to continue to be Mewar's northern boundary, and a yearly tribute was to be paid to the Rana, if Babar was allowed to keep what he had taken of the old kingdom of Delhi. But the Rajputs say that Sanga was betrayed by the chieftain whom he sent as his envoy—Sillaidi, of the Tuar tribe.

Babar tells us, that having mounted to survey his posts on a Monday morning, he was seriously struck with the reflection that he had always resolved, at one time or another, "to make an effectual repentance." No time was so good as the present, and with many poetical quotations, he vowed there and then never to drink wine. He broke all his gold and silver drinking-cups, and divided the fragments between the dervishes and the poor. He poured all his store of wine upon the ground, and swore if he gained the victory over "the Pagan," to remit the stamp-tax levied from his Muslim subjects.

Touched by this example, in the course of the next four-and-twenty hours, amirs, courtiers, soldiers, and other persons, to the number of three hundred, made vows of reformation. Then came Babar's last appeal to the bulk of his dejected army. He called the officers about him, and strove to wake the old fanatical spirit of Islam:—"Gentlemen and Soldiers,—Every man that comes into the world must pass away; God alone is immortal, unchanging. Who sits

down to the feast of life, must end by drinking the cup of death. All visitors of the inn of mortality must one day leave this house of sorrow. Rather let us die with honour than live disgraced.

"With fame, though I die, I am content. Let fame be mine, though life be spent. God most high has been gracious in giving us this destiny, that if we fall we die martyrs, if we conquer we triumph in His holy cause. Let us swear with one accord, by the great name of God, that we will never turn back from such a death, or shrink from the stress of battle, till our souls are parted from our bodies."

The words vibrated to the heart of every man who heard them. One and all seized the Koran, and swore to conquer or to die. The common soldiers caught the infection, and were eager to meet this, the most terrible of their enemies, instead of shrinking from him.

It was resolved to advance. When the ranks were formed, Babar galloped along his lines, encouraging each division, and giving special instructions to the leaders. On Saturday, March 27, 1527, was fought the battle that was to decide the fate of Rajast'han.

At first it seemed that, despite the talisman, Sanga was to be victorious here as on every other field. Never before had the Emperor's men faced a Rajput charge, and as the long lines of horsemen one after another dashed down upon the right of the foe, their eyes reddened with opium, their

lances and swords dripping blood, it was small wonder that the Muslim could do little against them. For hours the battle wavered ; the Rajputs, for all their valour, could not force the entrenchments, and even the steady fire of Babar's renowned gun could not stop that headlong assault. At last Babar sent orders to his flanking columns, "to wheel, and charge in the famous Mongul tactics, whilst at the same time he ordered his guns forward, and sent out the household troops at the gallop on each side of his centre of matchlock men, who also advanced firing." At that moment, Sillaidi the Tuar, who led the Rajput vanguard, saw his opportunity, wheeled, and went over to the enemy.

Taken in the rear, out-manœuvred, betrayed by one of their own blood, the Rajput array wavered and broke into an undisciplined mob. They were penned into a corner, the cannon-balls were ploughing through their disordered ranks, and few save themselves would have held on grimly as they did. Some escaped from the place of slaughter—amongst them the Rana himself, whose maimed condition made it easy for his followers to take him whither they chose—but many more fell where they stood. There lay the head of the Chondawut clan with three hundred of his house, vindicating his right to be first on the battlefield as in the council-chamber ; there, too, lay the son of the Prince of Marwar, with a score of other chieftains. On a little hill that overlooked the reeking shambles, Babar piled his

"Tower of Victory"—a pyramid of the skulls of the noblest among the slain.

Even after this crushing blow, the crippled Rana was lion-like as ever. He refused to shut himself up in Chitor, and commanded that its gates should be flung open to await his return as conqueror. His capital should be the tented field, until he had wiped out the stain of his defeat.

Even could the broken remnant of the clans of Rajast'han have gathered together, led by the women and children who alone were the survivors of many a princely house, their dauntless chief was fated to ride no more to battle. Within a year he had died—some said, of poison, but his life of war and struggle, his eighty wounds, and the fatal day of Kanwaha were more than enough to break so stout a heart. The most powerful of the Ranas of Mewar, and in many senses the greatest, had he left sons behind him who were fit to carry on the struggle, Chitor might not now "sit solitary."

THE SECOND SACK OF CHITOR

AFTER the disaster of Kanwaha, Rajast'han was given a breathing space to bind up her wounds, and if possible to repair some of the damage that had been wrought. Not a clan, not a household, but mourned the loss of some one whose bones whitened that plain, yet it seemed as if there was to be a chance for Rajput women to rear strong sons who should avenge them on the conqueror. Babar had only survived his foe for about two years and was then suddenly cut off, leaving his beloved son Humayun to weld the heterogeneous collection of states that he had subdued or cowed into a solid and lasting empire. Humayun was a gallant and courteous gentleman, as sensitive on the point of honour as any Rajput, brave, kindly, and as an individual worthy of all love and esteem. But he was not the man to build up an empire. He was too scrupulous, too emotional, given to act by fits and starts; in short, he lacked ballast, and to make matters worse, he had his father's love of opium without his father's cool head and iron will.

On the other hand, Rana Sanga's eldest surviving son, Rutna, had all the warlike qualities of his

race. When he came to the throne, he forbade the wardens of Chitor to close the gates which Sanga had left open. "Let them be," he said; "the portals of Chitor are Delhi and Mandu."

Unhappily he had many difficulties to encounter, some of his own making, some contrived, or increased, by those around him. First of his foes was his father's widow, Jawahir Bhai, a Marwar princess of untamable spirit, and also of uncontrolled ambition. On Sanga's death she found means to send messengers to Babar, offering him the crown of Mahmud of Malwa, which had been left at Chitor, and the fortress of Ranthambhor, one of the strongest places of Mewar, if he would put her son Bikramajit upon the throne in his half-brother's stead. Babar apparently was too busy to interfere, and the Rani's plot failed.

Then, to add to his difficulties, the Rana had been privately married by proxy to the daughter of the prince of Amber. On his accession, for some inexplicable reason, he forbore to own the marriage, and while he delayed Soorajmul of Boondi stepped in and carried off the lady, all in good faith. This laid the foundations of a bitter jealousy of Soorajmul, which was fomented by one cause and another, until at the spring hunting Rutna treacherously slew the Boondi prince, and received his own deathblow from the dying man.[1] Thus, within a few years, Jawahir Bhai received her wish, and Bikramajit was Rana of Mewar.

Of Bikramajit it is difficult to write with any

[1] See the story of "The Suttee's Curse."

certainty. Rajput chronicles deny him any good qualities, and it is certain that his insolence to his nobles and his love of low company far outweighed any claims to their fealty that he might have as the son of Rana Sanga. It is difficult to defend him for spending his days with such low-caste men as wrestlers and prize-fighters, but one of his chief offences seems to show a certain amount of foresight. He divined that, as Bayard had lamented in a far distant country, the age of chivalry was past, and the man with the gun was the master of the situation. The time had gone by when a charge of Rajput horsemen in saffron robes could decide the fate of a day. There must be artillerymen to work the big guns, and men on foot armed with matchlocks to protect them.

Now the Rajput, up to modern times, hated and despised the use of firearms in battle, and could not imagine himself fighting without his horse. When Bikramajit proposed to his army that a section should be dismounted and act as infantry, they were firmly persuaded that no gentleman could go to battle on foot ; and when he tried to point out the disadvantages from which they would suffer when pitted against guns, one and all replied that they would rather fall dead from their horses, as became Rajput honour, than save their lives by dismounting and taking matchlock in hand.

To argue with such men was impossible, and the Rana in great indignation engaged mercenary troops, who, for a consideration, were ready to oblige him by fighting on foot. This insult to the

pride of his nobles was received with unrepressed murmurings. But when he began to treat these common hired fellows with honour and friendship, lavishing gifts upon them, and allowing himself to be seen in their company, sullen grumbling broke into open rebellion. Everywhere the Rana's authority was defied; his laws were broken, his officials mocked. Bands of reivers from the mountains swept down upon Chitor, and carried off the herds that were grazing outside the walls from under the Rana's very nose. When Bikramajit ordered out his cavalry to pursue them, he was scoffingly told that he might send his new foot soldiers.

The turbulence and disorder of Mewar gave the opportunity for an enemy to pay off old scores. Bahadur Shah, king of Gujarat, had lately succeeded in possessing himself of Malwa, during Humayun's struggles with the ill-conditioned brothers and kinsmen who made the gentle Emperor's life a burden to him. Bahadur Shah was thus next neighbour to Mewar, and often had occasion to remember the humiliation of former kings of Malwa, one of whom had spent six months a prisoner in Chitor, leaving his crown behind him, while the other had been carried off from the midst of his own army. The time had now come for those insults to be avenged, and Bahadur Shah gathered his armies, and marched against the Rana, who was then within the territory of Boondi.

For all his shortcomings, Bikramajit was his

father's son, and, careless of the odds against him, he prepared to meet the Islamite forces. He found himself almost alone ; the hired infantry cared not to fight a losing battle ; and as for the Mewar nobles, they would not strike a blow for the man who had slighted them. Let his foot soldiers fight for him or not, his chieftains had done with Rana Bikramajit ; they were going back to Chitor, to defend the infant son whom a Boondi princess had borne to Rana Sanga after his death.

So the princes of Rajast'han gathered to the defence of the royal city. The Chondawut clan mustered strongly, despite its grievous losses on the plain of Kanwaha : the Rao from Mount Abu was there, with a band of followers ; and two princes forgot all blood feuds in this hour of supreme danger. The last Rana had murdered his host, the Rao of Boondi, at the spring hunt ; but the new Rao, Arjuna, who had just been elected to the throne, led five hundred of the Hara clan to Chitor, in answer to his sister's call for help. The story of the long struggle between Soorajmul of Mewar and his nephew, Pirthi Raj, has already been told ; now, when the fate of Chitor hung in the balance, Soorajmul's son, Bagh-ji, forgot how his father had been driven an exile from his native land, and hurried from Deola, bringing reinforcements. Many other chiefs of high rank were there, confident that their rock-enthroned goddess would not abandon them in the hour of need.

All the bravery in the world could do little against Bahadur Shah's artillery. He dragged

heavy guns to the ramparts, and manned them with the "Frankish" engineers—probably Portuguese—who served in his army. While the balls fell upon the besieged garrison from the skies, the earth would open beneath their feet, and a mine would explode, killing and maiming all around, and making a breach in the walls.

As in the siege under Ala-ad-din, the hill to the south was the weak place of the defences, and the bastion near it was held by Arjuna, the Boondi prince, with his five hundred men. The Frankish engineer tunnelled and burrowed—"murderous mole"—laid his train, and fired it. "Seated on a fragment of the rock, disparted by the explosion of the mine, Arjuna drew his sword, and the world beheld his departure with amazement." His Haras, to a man, shared his fate, and forty-five cubits of the rampart were blown away. But the Chondawuts rushed to the breach and held it so valiantly that the enemy for the time could not win an entrance.

It was plain to all that Chitor could not hold out much longer, unless some new force came to her aid. The leaders of the defence took counsel, and the first to have a plan was the Queen-Mother, Jawahir Bhai. If she had sinned in calling the infidel to put her son on his brother's throne, she atoned for it in these latter days, when ambition either for her son or herself was forgotten in the resolve to save Chitor and the honour of Mewar. She came from behind her silken curtains, she clothed herself with armour, and took weapons in her hand. Putting herself at the head of a sally,

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she faced the besiegers, and died the death of a warrior.

Of another spirit was Kurnavati, Sanga's young widow, the mother of the child, Udai Singh, for whom all their lives were being lost. A Hara of Boondi, she could not know the name of fear, and fain would she have followed her brother, Arjuna, and her lord, Rana Sanga, to the heaven that a woman may win through the fire. But she had a device whereby to save her son, if not his city, and she took her measures.

There is an ancient custom in the land of the Rajputs, whereby on a certain holy day, a woman, even an unmarried damsel, may send a bracelet to a man. The bracelet may be of gold and jewels, or of silk interwoven with spangles ; the sender may know nothing of the man but his name, and he is not likely ever to be allowed to see her. Nevertheless, be the token worthless, or the lady unknown, the receiver becomes her adopted brother as soon as he has bound it about his wrist, and sent back to her the embroidered bodice which custom ordains as the fitting return for her gift. From that hour he is vowed to her service, as were the knights of Christendom to the ladies (whom they also may never have seen) whose favours they bore on helm or sleeve ; she may ask what she pleases, though it involve the risk of his life, and he may not deny it.

Within the women's wing of the Rana's palace,

Kurnavati wove floss silk and spangles, and made a bracelet. Then she called to her a trusty messenger: "Go hence," she said; "make your way through the enemy's lines, and ride to the Emperor Humayun. Tell him by this token that he is bracelet-bound brother to Rani Kurnavati of Mewar."

The messenger had a long and weary quest. Humayun was not to be found in his palace at Delhi, nor among the rose-gardens that his father had planted in Agra. Onward pressed the Rani's envoy, fear for Chitor hastening his speed, until he reached Bengal, where Humayun had just defeated a rebellious army under a claimant to the throne of Delhi.

When the bracelet was laid before Humayun he was overcome with joy; such an appeal touched his chivalrous instincts and his kindly heart. "What would the Rani?" he asked, as he fastened the bracelet about his wrist; "she shall have her desire, were it the fortress of Ranthambhor."

"For herself the Rani asks nothing," was the messenger's reply, "but she implores her brother to protect her son."

Forthwith, forgetting all that he had to do in Bengal, Humayun turned his back upon his conquests, and marched towards Rajast'han. Bahadur Shah had not yet made a way into Chitor, and a little haste might yet have saved the city. But, alas! when almost within striking distance, Humayun dallied and hung back; some

say that, as a true believer, he could not fall upon another true believer who was executing the will of heaven upon "pagans." Be that as it may, instead of blows, he assailed Bahadur Shah with remonstrances, sending him a string of puns upon the word "Chitor"; and the city could hold out no longer.

Bravely and calmly the defenders prepared themselves, knowing well that "the last day of Chitor had arrived." Udai Singh was smuggled without the walls, in charge of a trusty henchman, and, remembering the vision of Rana Lakumsi, the nobles of Chitor crowned a king. Bagh-ji of Deola claimed his right to die for the city, since he was of the blood-royal. There was little time for ceremony, either in enthroning him, or in building the pyre for the women; the breach was yawning wide, past all hope of defence, and a few hours would see the enemy within the walls. Piles of gunpowder heaped beneath the dry wood quickened the end for some of the thirteen thousand women whom Rani Kurnavati led to their death; others were obliged to use poison, or the dagger. The gates were flung wide, and the last survivors of the garrison, in their saffron robes and coronets, rushed down upon the besiegers. Not a clan but had lost its head and the bravest of its members among the thirty-two thousand men who perished during the second siege of Chitor.

For a fortnight Bahadur Shah held his court, in the midst of the dying and the dead, within

the walls of Chitor; then news was brought that Humayun was advancing. Too late to save, the ever-scrupulous Emperor might not even have been able to avenge, save for the evil counsel of Bahadur Shah's engineers. Their chief officer had won Chitor for the king, and he knew it, and, in consequence, trusted entirely to his guns. Under the superintendence of engineers and artillerymen a camp was built, fortified, and entrenched, and Bahadur Shah established himself therein with his army, believing the officer's assurance that the enemy would never be able to get in.

The engineer officer was right, but he had never thought that the army within its trenches would be equally unable to get out. The surrounding country was scoured by Humayun's men; provisions ran shorter every day, and Bahadur Shah, in bitter shame, stole out of the camp by night with five men, and left his army to its fate. The army, waking and finding itself deserted, melted away in all directions, leaving the spoil of Chitor; and Humayun, going forth, found the camp of his enemy nearly in the same plight in which those poor Israelitish lepers found the camp of the Syrians.

Bahadur Shah fled from place to place before Humayun, and at last disappeared from the scene—to reappear, after a little while, and stir up fresh trouble for the Emperor. Humayun took possession of his dominions, Malwa and Gujarat, and sent for Rana Bikramajit to Chitor.

In the desolate halls of the fated city, the son of Babar girt the son of Sanga with a sword, thereby, as he imagined, installing him as ruler of Mewar, and vassal to himself, and putting an end to all strife, within and without. In a few years Humayun was a landless fugitive, wandering up and down the country, seeking, and sometimes seeking in vain, for a roof to cover his head among the lords of Rajast'han, and Bikramajit lay in the grave to which he had been hurried by his own subjects.

THE STORY OF UDAI SINGH

RANA BIKRAMAJIT had learned nothing from adversity, and treated his nobles with the same rudeness when he came back to Chitor as he had shown when first he became Rana. They bore with him for some time, chiefly because there was none worthier to take his place. Udai Singh, his half-brother, was only six years old; it was not the time to set a minor upon the throne. One day, however, in full assembly, the Rana was enraged against the chieftain of Ajmer, and struck him a blow.

All the nobles rose to their feet and left the hall. Not only would the insult have been gross under any circumstances, since the chieftain was a very old man, but it came with particularly ill grace from Bikramajit. The man whom he struck was that very chieftain of Srinuggur who had befriended Sanga in his need, and whom Sanga had rewarded with a grant of the lands of Ajmer. Well might the nobles glower upon their ill-conditioned young ruler, and troop out of the hall in sullen displeasure. The leader of the Chondawuts could not repress his indignation. "Hitherto, brother chiefs, we have had but a smell of the blossom," he said, as he stalked from the royal

presence; "but now we shall be obliged to eat the fruit." "To-morrow its flavour will be known," darkly muttered the Ajmer chieftain, as he followed.

Such an insult could not be borne by Rajputs, even from their overlord, and the nobles determined to have no more to do with Bikramajit, or with any other son of Rana Sanga. Two hot-headed youths had already brought Mewar to the verge of ruin, and if the kingdom was ever to be restored to something of former greatness, a strong man's hand was needed. The blood of Sanga had been tried and found wanting; but Sanga's brother, Pirthi Raj, whose name was still a household word even beyond the borders of Rajast'han, had left a son, Bunbeer, and he it was whom the nobles summoned to be Regent of Mewar. They could not appoint him Rana, since, although his father had been Pirthi Raj, his mother had been a bondmaiden; but they trusted that a few years under his rule would give Mewar time to recover, and them opportunities of seeing whether Udai Singh promised to be a worthy son of the "Lion of War."

Bunbeer at first hesitated, and coquetted with the proposal; he had no right to sit on the throne of Mewar; the black ostrich feathers set about the golden disk might not wave over the head of a bastard. Yet when the chieftains again urged him, pointing out the weakness of Mewar—on which, indeed, there was no reason to enlarge—and vowing that he, and he alone, could save the

land, Bunbeer had not the strength to resist them.

In the meanwhile, little Udai Singh, all unconscious of the intrigues that were being woven about him, ate, played, and slept in a corner of the Rana's palace. He was under the charge of a nurse, Punna,[1] and his playfellow was her little son, a child of about his own age.

It was evening, and dinner had been brought into the room by the barber, who, to his other manifold duties, adds that of cook in a Rajput household. Udai Singh had supped his rice and milk, and fallen asleep on a couch in one corner of the room, and his playfellow lay beside him. The nurse watched over son and foster-son.

On a sudden piercing screams arose from the women's apartments; Punna started up to listen. Shrieks and cries were not uncommon where a number of women were herded together; a slave might be receiving punishment for some offence, or some jealous beauty might be falling upon a rival. But no; again and again rose that pitiful cry, long-drawn, shrill, indescribable, melancholy, and Punna knew it for the death-wail.

As she listened breathlessly, in hurried the barber, half-distracted with fear. Had she not heard? Did she know nothing, shut in a corner of the palace? The nobles had deposed Bikramajit and set up Bunbeer, and now Bunbeer had slain Bikramajit, for whom the women were lamenting.

The nurse gazed about her in horror and dismay,

[1] "The diamond."

and her eyes fell upon the sleeping children. Well did she know that no usurper could sleep in peace as long as Sanga's son lived. It was the work of a moment to catch up the prince, to strip him of his rich garments, and to hide him at the bottom of a great basket in which fruit had been brought. She covered him with leaves, and gave the basket to the barber. "Get thee hence, and hide in the dry river-bed without the city; I will join thee when I may."

The barber lifted his load, and walked through guards and warders, out of the palace and beyond the city gates. All were used to seeing him go to and fro with the dishes, and if they noticed his basket, they probably thought that the good man was taking home the scraps from the royal table to his wife and children.

The hardest part of Punna's work still remained; the clothes that she had torn from Udai Singh must be put upon her own child. In desperate haste she did it, and then crouched down to wait the end.

She had not long to wait. Steps resounded in the passage, the hangings were lifted, and there stood Bunbeer, sword in hand.

"Woman, where is thy charge?" he asked. "Show me the prince, Udai Singh."

For a moment the mother's heart failed her, and she could not force her lips to speak. But she raised her hand and pointed to the couch. A gleam of steel, a short cry, and her son lay dead, while Bunbeer strode from the room, to feel himself indeed the Rana.

Bitter and many were the woman's tears over the dead prince, and gorgeous was the funeral pyre that was raised for the child's body. The nurse wept also until the funeral rites were all performed; then she demanded and obtained leave to depart. Her work was done, her nursling was dead, and none of the household needed her services. Gathering her few possessions, she wrapped herself in her veil, and left the house of mourning.

In the dry river-bed beyond the city she found the barber, who had been watching for her coming. The child had not woke or cried since he was put into the basket; perhaps Punna had given him a taste of the opium which was sure to be ready to her hand. By unfrequented ways and hidden foot-tracks they worked across country to Deola; here dwelt the son of Bagh-ji who had died for Chitor, and the nurse hoped to leave her charge in his care.

The chief received them kindly, and gave them food and shelter, but frankly owned that he durst not keep them. Deola was too near to Chitor, and at any moment the malice of a spy or the chance word of a stranger might bring the new Rana down upon them. Barber and nurse took up their load again, and wandered further to Dongerpoor, the chief of which was also of the royal house. Fain would he have received the child and its guardians, but he, too, might not brave the Rana's anger. He was not strong enough to protect the child in case of discovery, and he could only set Punna on her way.

Punna was not to be daunted. Among the eastern hills was the fortress of Komulmer, once the home of Bunbeer's father, Pirthi Raj, now garrisoned by a certain Assa Sah. He was no Rajput, but belonged to a mercantile tribe, and held the faith of the Jains; nevertheless, Punna determined to go to him for the protection which Rajputs were afraid to give.

To those who know the wild desolation of the region through which Punna had to go, it seems almost incredible that a woman burdened with a child—even though that woman were a Rajput with nerves of steel and the strength of a man—could have travelled through ravines, above precipices, across mountain torrents, in and out of a network of valleys, into the heart of the mountains. Beside the dangers of the road itself, there were dangers from wild beasts and from wild men. But the wild men themselves, the savage little Bhils who hide among the forests, and hold aloof from the rest of the world, heard her story and helped her on her way. In the days of Bappa Rawul, a Bhil had earned the right of putting the *teeka*—the mark of sovereignty—on the Rana's forehead; and the Bhils now helped Udai Singh, as their forefathers had helped his great ancestor.

Assa Sah was sitting with his mother in the fortress of Komulmer when he was told that a woman would speak with him. A veiled figure in the dress of a Rajput woman bowed before him, and in answer to his summons to draw near and say what she wanted she lifted in her arms the

boy who stood at her side. "Guard the life of thy sovereign, Assa Sah," she cried, and set the boy upon his knees.

A few questions soon drew forth Punna's story, and Assa Sah was perplexed and dismayed. Loyalty, honour, religion itself, bade him protect the child on his lap, but he had no wish for a conflict with Rana Bunbeer. The Jain has not the Rajput's love of battle for its own sake, and Assa Sah felt with justice that the quarrel was none of his. As he looked down with a gloomy brow upon the travel-stained figure of Punna, and tried to express his doubts and forebodings, his mother suddenly interposed. "Why fear and hesitate, oh, my son? Fidelity never looks at dangers or difficulties. He is your master, the son of Sanga, and, by God's blessing, the issue of this day will be glorious."

Thus was Punna's nursling in safety, but a heavy trial lay before the true-hearted woman. It was arranged that the child should pass for Assa's nephew, and as such he could not be attended by a Rajput nurse. She had to say farewell to the boy for whom she had given her all, and go back to the home where no child was looking for his mother's return.

So Udai Singh lived in the fortress among the hills, while all his kin mourned him for dead, and Bunbeer, thinking that he had destroyed all the seed-royal, grew more arrogant day by day, and forgot that his mother was a common slave girl, and that he ruled Mewar by election and not by

hereditary right. The nobles had often cause to rue the day when they placed him on the throne of Mewar, yet for seven years they bore with him, thinking that the line of Sanga was utterly destroyed.

A festival day once brought an unwonted number of guests to Komulmer, who were entertained with the best that Assa Sah could give. The Rajputs were seated in the place of honour, and the visitors of the governor's own class—wealthy traders and the like—were fed at another table. To the scandal of the company, Assa Sah's young nephew seized a dish of curds from the high table, and would not give it up, for threats at which he laughed, or for coaxings of which he took no notice. Some of the guests thought that Assa Sah knew not how to deal with an unruly boy; but there were one or two who felt sure that there was no trace of the governor's blood in the so-called "nephew."

Some time afterwards a great man sent word that he was passing by Komulmer; this was no other than the chieftain of Sonigurra, a descendant of that Maldeo who had cheated Rana Hamir by giving him a widow for bride. He was received at the entrance by a boy of thirteen, whose haughty bearing astonished the chieftain. On being told the lad was the governor's nephew, the chieftain declined to believe it, with scant courtesy. Thinking that the time had come for action, Assa Sah then confessed the truth.

The story spread like wildfire; all the great

nobles from Mewar, and from the surrounding districts, hurried to Komulmer to see the boy with their own eyes. The head of the Chondawuts came, smarting from an insult which Bunbeer had lately offered to him. At those state dinners, when the Rana dines with his nobles, it was the custom for him to send some of the food from his own plate to the man whom he wished to honour. This ceremony was hedged about with such etiquette that a chieftain has been known to leave the room in anger because the Rana sent a portion to one whose rank did not entitle him to receive it, and for the lord of another province of Rajast'han to eat off the same plate as the Rana is regarded as a sign that his birth is legitimate and his rank indisputable. Bunbeer could scarcely have chosen to revive a custom more unsuitable to one in his case; and when he sent scraps from his plate to the nobles of Mewar, they did not trouble to conceal their disgust. But when the honour was bestowed upon the head of the Chondawuts, he, knowing himself to be of the elder branch of the royal house, refused it, point-blank. "What is an honour from the hand of a true son of Bappa Rawul," he said boldly, "is a disgrace from the hand of a slave-girl's son."

So the Chondawuts were ripe for rebellion, and the news that a son of Rana Sanga was at Komulmer seemed the fulfilment of their wishes. In the assembly of nobles gathered within the fortress, Punna appeared with her helper the barber; she told her story once more, and swore

that the boy in their midst was the Rana's son, whom she had stolen from Chitor, and that the boy who had been burned with lamentations at the time of Bikramajit's murder was her own son. Assa Sah solemnly renounced his guardianship to the head of the Chohan clan, the senior amongst the nobles, to whom the nurse had long ago confided the secret, and the old chieftain took the boy upon his lap, and ate from the same plate with him. The *teeka* was marked on Udai Singh's brow, and the chiefs bowed before him.

Adherents and supplies began to pour in from all quarters. One of the first was the Sonigurra chief who had been the means of bringing the truth to light. He offered his daughter in marriage to the young Rana, and the Rana's council, thinking it wise to conciliate a powerful ally, agreed that the wedding should take place at once.

Now in the first bitterness of his wrath at finding how he had been tricked and cheated,[1] Rana Hamir had laid a solemn curse upon any of his race who should intermarry with the descendants of Maldeo, and many called this to mind, and urged that Udai Singh should have nothing to do with Sonigurra's daughter. But the advantages of the alliance were so plain, and the chieftain had done so much for Udai Singh's cause, that it was decided that Hamir himself would have been appeased, and that the curse was more than two hundred years old.

[1] See the "Story of Rana Hamir."

All went merrily for the new Rana, from small things to great. Every day brought him a fresh ally, and just as he was in need of supplies for his wedding, a caravan of five hundred horses and ten thousand oxen, bearing the dowry of Bunbeer's daughter, was intercepted in the mountain passes by some of his friends. Only two chiefs of any importance were not present at the marriage, and as soon as the festivities were over, an expedition set forth to bring them to reason. One was killed in fight, the other had the wisdom to surrender ; Bunbeer, who had marched to their aid, found himself almost deserted by his army, and fled back to Chitor.

There he might have stood a siege of many years for all the cannon that the Mewar chieftains were likely to be able to bring ; but his minister was at heart devoted to the cause of Sanga's son. One day, the gates of Chitor were opened to what appeared to be a long string of carts, bringing supplies of which the garrison were in want. As soon as the carts were within the walls a thousand armed men leaped from their hiding-places, the warders were cut down or overpowered, and Udai Singh marched in triumph into his capital.

It would have been no more than justice had Bunbeer met the fate he prepared for Bikramajit and Udai Singh ; but the Rana's advisers were thankful to have succeeded with so little trouble, and moreover, they could not well forget that he mounted the throne at their invitation. Bundeer was allowed to depart in peace, with all his family,

and with all the portable goods on which he had been able to lay hands; he ended his days in comfort and respectability in the Deccan, the founder of a family that survived for many generations.

NOTES.

(*a*) Sir E. Arnold has versified the story of Punna; but he makes her die of grief for her child on the day of the murder, whereas the real nurse's task was by no means ended when the little prince was smuggled out of the palace. After swearing to Udai Singh's identity in the assembly at Komulmer, she vanishes from Tod's pages.

(*b*) The Jains are a numerous sect, from whose ranks were drawn most of the revenue officers, bankers, and magistrates of Rajast'han. Their creed forbids the shedding of blood.

"Komarpal, the last king of Anhulwara of the Jain faith, would not march his armies in the rains from the unavoidable sacrifice of animal life that must have ensued. The strict Jain does not even maintain a lamp during that season, lest it should attract moths to their destruction."—TOD.

THE THIRD SACK OF CHITOR

THE same year that saw Udai Singh brought back to Chitor amid the rejoicings of all his people, saw also the birth of one who was to make Chitor a desolation for ever.

During the years that Udai Singh had spent in the hill fortress, there had been many changes at Delhi. Humayun had continued his old policy of kindness and forbearance to rebellious younger brothers and revolted subjects. While no man upon occasion could act with more courage and energy than himself, no man could be more entirely abandoned to pleasure and self-indulgence at other times, and his humane disposition and incorrigible idleness combined to lose his throne for him. He took no pains to secure Malwa as soon as he had won it, and he gave up his time to feasting and merriment. Then came the news that Sher Khan, an Afghan chief, had revolted and was conquering Bengal for himself. Humayun, who had left his work in Bengal unfinished to save Kurnavati's son, now hurried thither, and as soon as his back was turned, Malwa and Gujarat were again united under Bahadur Shah, who had emerged from obscurity and returned to trouble the land.

Sher Khan fell back as Humayun advanced,

and the Emperor made his way into Bengal where he once more held revel, with "jollity and sensual pursuits," while the adroit Sher Khan seized all the roads leading from Bengal and cut off the Emperor's communications. Humayun's brothers made no attempt to help him: one who had been sent back to collect stores had himself proclaimed Emperor at Agra; the other promptly deposed him, but did nothing against Sher Khan.

Humayun was obliged to come to terms with his enemy. While an agreement was being arranged—truce being proclaimed, and the two hostile armies busy making friends, after the wont of soldiers in all ages and every climate—Sher Khan suddenly fell upon the imperial forces and butchered the greater number of them in their sleep. Humayun flung himself into the Ganges, and owed his life to a water-carrier, who ferried him over on his goat-skin bag.

A year later, and Humayun had gathered another army and met Sher Khan near Kanauj, the ancient city of the Rajputs. It was not such an army as his father Babar had led to victory. The hundred thousand men who composed it had little care for anything but their own skins, and those who had not deserted ere the day of battle, fled in shameful rout before a gun was fired. Humayun escaped with life, to wander up and down with a few trusty followers, and wait what the gods might send.

After all, Humayun must have had something of his father's tenacity and dogged perseverance; for fifteen years he struggled against fate, striving

to gain allies and recruits. At first he roamed the deserts of Rajputana and Sind, enduring terrible privations, often within an ace of losing his life. If they had only realised it, here was the opportunity for the Rajput chiefs ; a little timely support, a troop of horse, a purse of gold from each, and the House of Timur would have been for ever bound to the children of the sun and the moon. But the prince of Jessulmer, to whom he turned in his need, refused to befriend him, and when he was so ill-advised as to ask help from Rao Maldeo of Marwar, the Rao, whose son had fallen at Sanga's side at the battle of Biana, replied by sending out men to take Humayun prisoner.

Again Humayun turned to flee, taking with him his new-made wife, Hamida, the daughter of a holy sheikh, who had fallen in love with him despite his misfortunes and his almost hopeless prospects. Her sorrowful hour was at hand, but their only chance of escape was to plunge into the Indian desert known as "the region of death"—a waterless sea where the wind piles up the sand in waves from twenty to a hundred feet high. Here and there, a few wells or a spring yield a little fresh water, but the wells are from seventy to five hundred feet in depth. Except with the greatest care, the region through which Humayun led his little band was impassable. The lives of all depended upon their steeds, and those who fell by the way must leave their bones to whiten the sands, where the mirage added mockery to their sufferings.

Humayun's chronicler tells the story of this journey, which was to have such great consequences for Rajast'han and for all India. "Humayun mounted his horse at midnight, and fled towards Amarkot. His horse on the way falling down dead with fatigue, he desired Tardi Beg, who was well-mounted, to let him have his; but so ungenerous was this man, and so low was royalty fallen, that he refused to comply with his request. The troops of the Raja (Maldeo) being close to his heels, he was necessitated to mount a camel, till one Nidim Kola, dismounting his own mother, gave the king her horse, and placing her on the camel, ran himself on foot by her side.

"The country through which they fled being an entire desert of sand, the Moghuls were in the utmost distress for water; some ran mad, others fell down dead; nothing was heard but dreadful screams and lamentations. To add, if possible, to this calamity, news arrived of the enemy's near approach. Humayun ordered all those who could fight to halt, and let the women and baggage move forward. The enemy not making their appearance, the king rode on in front to see how it fared with his family.

"Night in the meantime coming on, the rear lost their way, and in the morning were attacked by a party of the enemy." The Moghuls, however, were desperate, and about twenty of them slew the leader of the Rajputs and put his men to flight, taking prize of their horses and camels.

"For three whole days there was no water; on the fourth day they came to a well, which was so deep that a drum was beaten to give notice to the man driving the bullocks that the bucket had reached the top." Still, in India, you may see the yoke of oxen pacing round and round the well's mouth to haul the bucket to the surface.

"The people were so impatient for the water, that so soon as the first bucket appeared, ten or twelve of them threw themselves upon it before it quite reached the brim of the well, by which means the rope broke, and the bucket was lost, and several fell headlong after it. . . . Some, lolling out their tongues, rolled themselves in agony on the hot sand; while others, precipitating themselves into the well, met with an immediate, and consequently an easier death. . . .

"The next day, though they reached water, was not less fatal than the former. The camels, who had not tasted water for several days, now drank so much that the greatest part of them died. The people also, after drinking, complained of an oppression of the heart, and in about half an hour a great part of them expired. A few, with the king, reached Amarkot."

Amarkot, one of the "nine castles" of the region of death, must have seemed a paradise to the fugitives, although it was no more than a fortress of brick with stone bastions, surrounded by houses and huts. There was a canal to the north, so that Humayun's followers might feast

their eyes on the sight of water all day long, and Raja Rana of Amarkot "spared nothing that could alleviate their miseries, or express his fidelity to the king."

In October 1542, Hamida Begum, who had survived the horror of that desert march with the wonderful strength sometimes given to women in her condition, brought forth a son, Akbar, hereafter to be known as "the noblest king that ever ruled in India." Leaving mother and child for a while under the protection of the hospitable raja, Humayun set forth again on his wanderings. At length, with the reluctant help of the Shah of Persia, he conquered Kandahar, and his old home of Kabul. It seemed as if Kabul were bound in some mysterious way with the fortunes of his house. From that time he steadily regained ground. His brothers one by one died, or were exiled. Sher Khan, who had ruled in Delhi with great energy and wisdom, was killed in battle, leaving the throne to a line of incapable successors. When several of these had once more reduced the kingdom to the anarchy from which Sher Khan reclaimed it, Humayun swept down from his mountains, seized the Punjab, routed his foes in all directions, and established himself at Delhi once more. Six months later, he missed his footing on the marble stairs of his palace, fell from the top of the flight to the bottom, and died. As has been said of him by a modern writer, "He tumbled through life, and he tumbled out of it."

His heir was the child born at Amarkot, who was then only thirteen years old.

Akbar succeeded to Delhi and the Punjab—all that had been regained of his father's empire—at the same age at which Udai Singh was brought back to Chitor from Komulmer. But the two lads were of very different mettle. Not a single daring, wise, or gracious action is recorded of Udai Singh during his reign of nearly thirty years. The son of one of the bravest kings over whose head the golden disk was ever raised, he showed himself upon all occasions not only a fool, but a coward. Indeed, so utterly contemptible was he, that one would be inclined to think that, in the course of his childish wanderings, Punna's foster-son had been replaced by some spurious prince, were it not that in his son, Pertap, all the finest qualities of the line of Bappa Rawul appeared once more.

After four years under the guardianship of his wise but somewhat high-handed tutor, Bairam Khan, Akbar broke free from control, and from that time showed that he was not one with whom it was safe to trifle, despite his youth.

One of his first expeditions was against the Rajputs. The mother's sufferings, as sometimes comes to pass, may have impressed themselves upon her unborn child; and, in any case, Akbar was sure to have heard from Hamida Begum and others, the story of Rajput inhospitality and treachery, and of that flight across the desert. Marwar was invaded, and Rao Maldeo humbled;

the Raja of Amber was spared, since, with great presence of mind, he had bowed his pride to visit the lord of Delhi, and to give him a daughter in marriage—the first of Rajput princes to defile his house by an alliance with the infidel.

Other chiefs took timely warning and paid homage to Akbar, who showed himself not unkindly disposed towards all of their faith. He abolished the poll-tax on unbelievers, and also the tax upon Hindu pilgrimages—two of the most unpopular tolls which his Hindu subjects had ever been required to pay. Yet there were some who refused to be conciliated, and the first of these was Udai Singh, who held aloof in Chitor, not from pride or valour, but from sheer indolence and stupidity. He had passed from the rule of his guardians under the sway of an artful mistress, and he cared nothing for his duties as Rana of Mewar, so long as she was with him. With his usual blindness to consequences, he allowed Baz Bahadur, the Afghan ruler of Malwa, to take refuge with him when driven out of Malwa by Akbar. Akbar marched into Mewar to take vengeance; the Rana sat supine within the walls of Chitor, without attempting to raise a finger for his kingdom.

The danger of the city woke the better instincts of Udai Singh's mistress. Shameless and cunning as she was, she had the courage of her race, and since her lover proved to be weaker than a woman, it was time for her to be more than

man. Like the Rani Jawahir Bhai, in the former siege, she clad herself in armour, and led the sallies into the Moghul camp. Once, 'tis said, she even made her way to Akbar's headquarters. The Emperor and his army were called from Chitor by some more pressing need elsewhere; from the battlements the garrison beheld the besieging army collect their gear and melt away, and the Rana burst into rejoicings, and assurances that he owed his deliverance to his mistress.

This was more than the chieftains of Mewar could bear; had they not fought for their worthless king as beseemed their race, and was all the honour to be given to his paramour? The brave woman was murdered by their orders, and the craven Rana, without the wit to defend her or the spirit to avenge her, lost the only person who loved him or influenced him.

Moghul historians say nothing of Akbar's repulse by the Rana's mistress; they only tell us that in 1567 the Emperor sat down in front of Chitor, with three or four thousand men, his artillery, and his most skilful engineers. The men of Chitor well victualled, with good store of water and ammunition, laughed at their besiegers, and at first to Akbar's own men the city seemed impregnable. "The castle is situated in the midst of a level plain which has no other hills," writes one of the Moghul historians who was present at the siege. "The mountain is twelve miles round at the base, and nearly six at the summit. On the east and north it is faced with hard stone, and the

garrison had no fears on those sides, nor could guns, swivels, stone-slings, nor mangonels do much damage on the other sides, if they managed to reach them. Travellers do not mention any fortress like this in all the world. The whole summit was crowded with buildings, some several stories high, and the battlements were strongly guarded, and the magazines full."

Akbar's headquarters were at a place marked by a column of white limestone thirty feet high, from the summit of which a beacon blazed every night to give light to the camp. The watchers on the ramparts of Chitor could see the red flame streaming against the sky, as they paced to and fro. Their Rana, who should have been going from post to post to hearten the defenders, was not with them; he had fled to the Aravali hills, leaving others to defend his capital for him.

But the sons of Mewar as of old came at the hour of need. There was Jeimul of Bednore, sprung from a Marwar clan, but owing allegiance to the Rana, a tried warrior; and there was Putta of Kailwa, of a branch of the Chondawut clan, a sixteen-year-old boy. Once again the head of the Chondawuts claimed his hereditary right to rule the city and royal palace in the Rana's absence, and to hold "the gate of the sun" against attack. The lord of Deola still remembered the land of his forefathers, and had sent his son to Chitor. Many others there were, whose names have been handed down through the ages; and of all the chiefs who came from far and near to hold the

city, but one of any consequence lived to strike another blow for Mewar when the siege was ended.

Akbar set about his work in the painstaking and methodical fashion to be expected from one whose spare time was given to perfecting various devices for the improvement and cleaning of gun-barrels and the firing of guns. Artificers and workmen—builders, carpenters, masons, smiths, and sappers—were summoned to his camp from all parts of India. Day after day the trenches moved a little nearer to the city, in spite of a withering fire from the ramparts. Undauntedly the workmen—all volunteers, stimulated by heavy largesse from the Emperor—toiled at their posts, digging trenches, burrowing mines, and making the broad covered ways called *sabats*, under the shelter of which an attacking force could get up to the walls. As they fell, to the number of a hundred or so every day, their bodies were used as cover by the survivors, and still the work went on.

The besiegers began to feel their peril; the Rana had deserted them; it seemed as if "the Mother" had deserted them also. If bravery and self-devotion could have prevailed on her to stay, she would never have left her rocky throne; but she needed a crowned victim, and the Rana was as loth to die for Chitor as to live for her.

A mine blew a bastion into the air; besiegers and besieged mingled together in the breach; while they struggled hand to hand, a second mine was fired, and Rajput and Moghul were hurled into the air. The army on the plain below was

choked with dust and smoke, and pelted by fragments of stone and of what had been human bodies. The chief of the Chondawuts was killed at his post, the "gate of the sun" in the centre of the eastern face, and the command fell upon the boy Putta—the only son of his house. His mother, who was in the city, feared that love or anxiety for the young wife to whom he had lately been married, might weaken his courage. But all in Chitor breathed the same spirit, from aged grandsires to beardless youths, and from scarred warriors to tender and delicate women. The widowed mother and the bride of a few months put on armour, and took lance in hand. They went forth to battle with the sons of Mewar, and fell side by side. Where the women could dare so much, the men could not fall behind them; and the story of that siege is one of the proudest if the saddest of the memories of Chitor

By this time, one of the sabats had overtopped the wall of the castle, and from a gallery on its roof Akbar was wont to look over the fight, letting off his favourite gun "Sangram" whenever a light flashed from the bastion. It was the hour of evening prayer; there sat the Emperor, long-armed and sturdy, watching the scene with his keen black eyes, in the same intent manner in which he would wait on his elephant for the deadly spring of the forest tiger. Jeimul came out upon the bastion, giving directions to his men, and his form showed itself plainly to Akbar in a sudden gleam of light. A quick movement of the Emperor, a shot from

"Sangram," and the Rajput fell dead where he stood.

Then the garrison gave up hope, and prepared for the last scene. The women walked in their slow procession, while the men put on their saffron robes, and ate the *pân* together—the last food that a brave warrior tastes ere he goes to his death. From his gallery Akbar saw the flames quivering, leaping, flaring within the city, and his army, knowing what they meant, rushed through the northern walls where the defences had been utterly destroyed. But Chitor was not yet won. Down to the breaches poured a torrent of yellow-clad warriors, the husbands and fathers of those whose pyre was even now roaring on high to light the slaughter. Every inch of the way was slippery with blood; through crooked streets, along narrow lanes, the besiegers slowly forced a passage, each step a slain foe. At least eight thousand Rajputs fell during the siege, or on that crowning day; nine queens and five princesses headed the list of the women.

On a fair May day in 1567, Akbar entered the city, which was never again to be Queen of Mewar. Never again did the Rana make his home within that haunted ground; never again did the sons of Mewar gather to hold it against an enemy. When one steeped in the traditionary lore of Rajast'han first pitched his tent among the ruins of Chitor, these words alone came to him: "How doth the city sit solitary that was full of people! how is she become a widow!"

THE BATTLE OF HULDIGHAT

WHEN Akbar marched from ruined Chitor he left desolation in the land, and despair in the hearts of the people. The glory had departed. Shrine and temple were broken down, palace and pleasure-house were laid low, and all the "carven work" was defaced and spoiled, whether it showed the triumphs of a Rajput chief or the glories of his gods. All the most sacred relics of Chitor were borne away by the Islamite; no more would the giant kettledrums be sounded to call the sons of Mewar to battle; never again would the great candelabras be lighted before the altar of the "Mother." The very gates were taken from their hinges, to be set up in the new city that Akbar intended to build.

The tide of conquest was not stayed at Chitor. The fortress of Ranthambhor—that very stronghold which Humayun had pledged himself to restore if Kurnavati Bhai asked for it—had been taken back by two valiant Rajput chieftains, one a Hara of Boondi, the other of the Chohan clan. It was now held as a fief of Mewar by Rao Soorjun of Boondi, the son of that Arjuna who had perished when defending Chitor against Bahadur Shah. Akbar laid siege to the fortress for some

time without result, and as his presence was needed in other parts of his empire, the flag with the sun's disk might still have waved over its battlements, had it not been for two renegades who were in his camp—Bhagwan Das, the lord of Amber, and his nephew, the Raja Maun.

Raja Maun believed that a parley with Soorjun might have good results for the Emperor, and proposed an armistice and a visit to the fortress. With a few attendants he entered the hall as the Emperor's ambassador, and was favourably received by Soorjun. As the two chieftains were talking, suddenly Soorjun's uncle rose from his seat, and turned to the mace-bearer, who was standing close behind Raja Maun. With a deep obeisance he took the mace from his hand, and gently thrust him into the place where the governor of the castle usually sat. All stared, but not for long: some had seen those keen black eyes, that sallow face, and noted the wart on the left side of the nose that was ever held to be a sign of the good fortune that waited on Akbar; others instinctively guessed who the disguised stranger must be. There was a movement of recognition, and then a hesitation; it was against all Rajput traditions to lay hands on a guest, yet how should they deal with this, their most terrible foe, who had come of his own accord into the lion's mouth, and must have spied out all their defences? And what should be said to Raja Maun, who had betrayed them?

Akbar alone showed neither fear nor anxiety;

the "godlike dignity" which his son praised was unruffled, and there was not a tremor in the clear ringing voice that asked, "Well, Rao Soorjun, what is to be done?"

Rao Soorjun had no answer ready, but Raja Maun quickly recovered his presence of mind, and took up the word, "Leave the Rana, give up Ranthambhor, and become the Emperor's man, with high honours and offices."

And in this way—so say Rajput chroniclers—the fortress of Ranthambhor surrendered to Akbar. After all, it is easy to understand how even honourable men might yield in such a case. Rajputana was beginning to split apart, and her states were working, each for its own interest, and not unreservedly for the good of all. The days were past when Rana Sanga had made all proud to join with Mewar, and Udai Singh was not worth the sacrifice of a single man. The bravery and self-possession shown by Akbar must have appealed strongly to all who were in Ranthambhor; this was no ignoble foe to whom they were yielding, but a born king of men, who, moreover, had married a Rajput wife, and allowed her to worship her gods as she pleased. Boondi had made enough sacrifices for Mewar, and the terms offered were worthy of the Hara pride. The Rao was to govern fifty-two districts, unquestioned and unchecked; when called upon he must send his levy of men to the imperial army, but no chieftain of Boondi should be forced to pay the poll-tax, or to serve beyond the Indus. No Boondi princess

should be made to enter the imperial harem. The kettledrums of Boondi should beat within the gates of Delhi, the chieftains should enter the audience-hall fully armed, and no one should require them to prostrate themselves before the Emperor.

It was small wonder that Rao Soorjun accepted these terms, and the only resistance came from Sawunt Hara, the chief who had regained Ranthambhor from its Afghan governor in former days. He had given it to the lord of Boondi on condition that it should be held as a fief of Mewar; and he would not share in the treason, or profit by a breach of faith. He and his men were too few to hold Ranthambhor against the Emperor, but at least they could die to preserve their honour unstained. His last act was to engrave upon a pillar a solemn curse upon "whatever Hara of gentle blood should ascend the castle of Ranthambhor, or should quit it alive." He then put on the saffron robe, ate the *pân* with his followers, and all to a man fell at the gates of the fortress, overmastered by hopeless odds. From that day no Hara passed Ranthambhor without turning away his head, as if in shame.

Akbar returned home in triumph with the spoils of Chitor. In spite of his religious prejudices, he was too noble-minded not to respect a valiant foe; tradition may err in saying that the two stone figures on elephants, which he placed by the gate of his palace at Delhi, were intended for Jeimul and Putta; but he certainly appreciated their

bravery, and from this time some of his wisest advisers and his most skilful generals were Rajputs.

In the meanwhile Udai Singh had been dragging out his dishonoured life, unregarded by any man. During the Emperor's invasion, he took refuge among the forests and hills; after Akbar had gone back to Delhi, the Rana ventured to come out of his retirement and even to build a city on the shores of a lake that he had made by damming a stream. He called it after himself, Udaipur; and thus it happened that the chief city of Mewar still bears the name of one of the unworthiest of her kings.

There is nothing else to record in the life of Udai Singh, except that he was the father of five-and-twenty sons. His favourite child was Jugmal, whom he intended to make his heir; he had no love for his rightful successor, Pèrtap, the son of his ill-omened first marriage, and he had been hardly stayed from putting to death another son, Sukta, who was exiled from home.

When Sukta came into the world, the Brahmins and astrologers were summoned to draw his horoscope, and all shook their heads over the result. The child, they said, was fated to be a foe to Mewar, and to bring evil upon his house. From that hour, Sukta was closely watched. He was about five years old when, as he was playing about the room where his father sat, a skilled craftsman came with a dagger that he had made for the Rana. Udai Singh tested it upon a bale of cotton, and had approved its temper, when little Sukta seized it. "Daggers are meant to cut flesh, and not

cotton," the child declared, and forthwith tried the blade upon his own hand. The keen edge pierced to the bone, but Sukta neither cried out nor flinched, calmly watching the blood as it rushed out and dyed the carpet. This was too much for his cowardly father, who was assured that such courage in a child could only foreshow disaster. Orders were given that Sukta should be put to death at once.

As the child was being carried away he was met by the head of the Chondawuts, who, hearing the story, ordered the executioners to give him up, and boldly demanded his life of the Rana. "Let me have the boy," he cried. "I am childless, and he shall be my son, and lead the Chondawuts when I am gone."

Udai Singh durst not refuse the greatest chief of Mewar, and the old man bore off the child and reared him at his beautiful estate of Saloombra, the home of the lord of the Chondawut clan.

Four years after the fall of Chitor, Udai Singh prepared to quit a world that would be none the poorer for losing him. It was the time of the spring hunt, when the nobles of Mewar are wont to slay the boar, and the Rana distributes green dresses and scarves to them ere he rides forth at their head, when the chieftains gathered about his deathbed. Ere he died, he named Jugmal as his heir, disregarding Pertap. Then, as custom ordained, his dead body was removed to the house of the family priest, whose business it was to carry out the mourning rites, while his palace

was decked for the enthronement of the new Rana.

Among those who had stood near the dying man was his brother-in-law, the Sonigurra chief, whose sister was Pertap's mother, and his blood boiled to find his nephew thus coolly set aside. "Will you stand by and see this wrong?" he fiercely asked the Chondawut chief, who answered his question with another.

"When a sick man in his last moments asks for milk, why refuse it?" he said, implying that Udai Singh was not worth opposing. "But my choice is the nephew of Sonigurra, and I stand by Pertap."

Nevertheless, all the preparations went on for Jugmal's installation, without any gainsaying. The chiefs were assembled to see Jugmal throned as their new Rana, and Pertap, knowing that his brother's dominions would be no safe dwelling-place for him, had ordered his attendants to boot and saddle. As Jugmal rose to take his place beneath the sun's disk, he found on one side of him the Chondawut chief whose right it was to gird the Rana with his sword, and on the other side the Tuar chief, the only survivor from the sack of Chitor.

"You mistake, my lord," said the Chondawut, as he caught Jugmal by the arm, "that seat is not for you, but for your brother."

Ere Jugmal could resist, or even realise what was passing, he was forced down upon a cushion near the throne, and Pertap was brought forward. The Chondawut girt the rightful heir with the

sword, thrice touched the ground before him, and led the shout that acclaimed Pertap Rana of Mewar.

Thus suddenly raised from a landless fugitive to be "the sun of the Hindus," Pertap showed neither surprise nor excitement. As soon as the enthronement was over, he reminded his nobles that it was the time of the spring hunt—"To horse, and slay a boar to Gouri,[1] and take the omen for the coming year." Rana and chiefs mounted their steeds, put on their green scarves, and rode forth as of old, and the quarry that they brought back was held to bode well for Mewar.

"Had I been the son of Rana Sanga," was Pertap's cry from that hour, "and had Udai Singh never come between us, no Toork[2] had ever given laws to the land of princes." It seemed a hopeless task that he had now set himself, to restore the independence of Mewar. Against him were leagued not only the imperial forces, but the other Rajput states; Marwar, Boondi, Amber, Bikanir, were all vassals of Delhi, and all save Boondi had given their daughters in marriage to the "Toork." Even one of his own brothers, Sugra, left him for Akbar, who could give lands and villages, and the Segarawuts, his descendants, became a powerful family at the Emperor's court. Mewar was impoverished by the late invasion, both

[1] *Gouri* = the goddess of increase—one of the many titles of Bhavani, the "Mother" whom Rajputs worship under countless names.

[2] *Toork* = Turk, infidel. The opposite term of reproach is *Kafir* which the Muslim applies to Hindus and others.

in men and in gear. Any one but Pertap would have renounced the struggle ere it was begun, would have vowed to be the Emperor's man, and taken all the good things that were offered to him.

But Pertap would not allow that the sons of Mewar could submit; if they might not conquer, at least they could harry and rob and vex the power of Delhi, and at the worst they could die with honour. For himself, he was vowed never to know rest or ease until the Toork was driven from the land, and the glories of old were brought back to Chitor.

So from that hour the kettledrums that used to beat in the van of the Rana's army were ordered to the rear; Mewar could not take the field in triumph until her former disgrace was wiped out. The gold and silver dishes that had decked the Rana's table disappeared; platters twisted from the leaves of trees would serve for Pertap and his chiefs until they regained the spoil of Chitor. The soft couch on which the Rana had slept was taken away; a heap of straw should be his bed until he could stable his horse in the palace of the foe. His beard and the beards of his followers fell straggling and untrimmed; no scissors should cut off a single hair until Chitor was once more queen among the cities of Rajast'han. He left Udaipur, and made his headquarters at Komulmer; henceforth his home, and the home of all who were with him, was to be in a tall fortress or in the tented plain, not within the walls of a palace.

One of his first acts was to send for his brother

Sukta to his court. The chief who had adopted Sukta was unexpectedly the father of several boys in his old age, and as the young man's position at Saloombra was not very happy, he gladly hastened to Pertap, who received him with great kindness. At first the brothers were excellent friends, but soon the old story was repeated ; as in the time of Sanga and Pirthi Raj, the younger was jealous of the elder, and thought himself better fitted to rule Mewar. Angry words passed between them at a hunt, the breach widened every day, until Sukta proposed that they mount their war-steeds, level their spears, and let a single combat decide the question.

Pertap agreed, perhaps remembering how his grandsire had sought the Tiger's Mount. With the usual Rajput courtesy they disputed who should strike the first blow,[1] each calling upon the other to begin, and they had just agreed to charge at the same moment, when the family priest rushed upon them, and bade them cease the unholy strife.

By this time both were too angry to stop for policy or even for decency. Levelling their spears, they were about to ride in, when the priest, resolved to stay them at any cost, thrust his dagger into his own breast and fell dead between them.

At the sight both reined up their horses and leaped down; it was too late to save the good man's life, but his blood was a barrier which neither dared pass. When Pertap mastered himself to speak, it was to bid Sukta leave his presence for

[1] Compare "The Story of Aloo Hara."

ever ; with a mocking bow Sukta turned away, and took horse for Delhi. By that day's work Pertap had lost a brother, and the Emperor had gained an ally.

Deserted for the most part by his own kin, and by the rulers of other states, Pertap was nobly supported by many of his chieftains. The leader of the Chondawuts was loyal to him as in the day when Jugmal was to be enthroned ; the sons of Jeimul and the sons of Putta followed their father's example. No bribe that Akbar could offer would tempt any of them from their allegiance.

Once more the old tactics were begun, those that had served Rana Hamir against the forces of Ala-ad-din. The word was sent throughout Mewar that Rana Pertap was about to take to the hills, and that all who would not be counted amongst his foes must follow him. The pastures were deserted, the fields lay unsown, untilled. The cattle were driven up into defiles of the Aravali, where no man durst pursue. The towns and villages were left to fall to pieces without inhabitant, and the wild beasts, the "doleful creatures" of the wilderness, couched where chieftains and warriors had dwelt. The highways were unoccupied, and the thorns choked the paths once trodden by busy feet. The soldiers of the Emperor could find food neither for themselves nor for their horses. Ever and anon, the Rana would sweep down from Komulmer, or from another of the fastnesses amongst the hills, and plunder some caravan that was making its toilsome way from the port of

Surat, laden with costly merchandise for Akbar and his court. Or he would descend upon the plains, that had been called "the garden of Rajast'han," to make sure that none dared to feed flocks or to sow corn where he had commanded that there should be desolation. Once, on the banks of a river, he found a wretched herdsman, who hoped his goats might wander unnoticed in the meadows; a few sharp questions, a curt order, and the goat-herd was hanged where his flock had grazed, and his body left to wither in the sun, a warning to all who might think to defy their Rana.

Akbar noted all these signs with displeasure. He was loth to proceed to extremity with the Rana. Naturally fair and open-minded beyond the wont of his own or, indeed, of any age, he would fain have seen all the diverse races and creeds of his empire living in peace beneath his shadow, and the Rajputs were greatly favoured amongst his subjects. His favourite wife—the mother of his son Selim (Jehangir)—was a Rajput princess. Todar Mal, his great financier, who re-constructed the revenue of Delhi, was a Rajput; so were many of his generals, amongst them Bhagwan Das of Amber, and Maun Singh, Bhagwan's nephew. Although as a lawgiver he had refused to sanction some of the Hindu customs, such as child-marriage, animal sacrifices, and compulsory *suttee*, he ever showed tolerance for their religion, allowed them to perform their ceremonies within his palace, and forbade his other subjects to slaughter cows. The other

Rajput states were content to do him homage; he had displeased many rigid Muslims by his kindness to these idolaters; and yet Mewar still defied him, in spite of the lesson that he had hoped to have given at the sack of Chitor.

The cause that changed a desultory guerilla warfare into an organised campaign, is thus told by the Rajput chronicles. Maun Singh of Amber was returning homewards after fighting Akbar's battles in another part of the Empire, and had to pass through Mewar. Fallen and poverty-stricken as he was, the Rana was still "the first of the thirty-six royal tribes," and Maun Singh sent a courteous message to ask if he might be allowed to present himself before Pertap. Pertap was then at Komulmer, and sent back answer that he would meet Raja Maun on the shores of the lake by Udaipur. When the Raja and all his train reached the spot, there were the nobles of Mewar, and at their head was Umra, Pertap's eldest son; the Rana himself was nowhere to be seen. A feast was made ready, and Umra courteously begged Maun Singh and his followers to sit and eat; he would be their host, he said, since the Rana was suffering from violent headache, and could not appear to welcome his guests.

Every one present knew as well as Umra that the true reason was that Pertap would not break bread with one who had allied himself with Delhi. "Tell the Rana I can guess the cause of his headache," retorted Maun Singh, "but no man can take his place. If he will not be my host, who will?"

Pertap's answer to this message was clear and plain. "I may not eat with one who has given his sister to a Toork, and himself eats with Toorks."

In wrath and shame Raja Maun rose from his place, leaving the feast untasted. "No food from your hand will I take," he cried, "save the grains of rice which must be offered to the gods. It was to save your honour that we sacrificed our own, and gave our sisters and our daughters to the Toork; abide in peril if you will; this country shall not hold you long."

He gave the signal to his followers to mount their horses, and was about to ride away when the Rana himself strode down to see the last of his guests. At the sight of Pertap, scarred, haggard, his dress weather-stained and his arms hacked and dinted, yet a king manifest, Raja Maun's anger blazed forth—"If I do not humble your pride," he swore aloud, "my name is not Maun."

Pertap's reply was calm and dignified—"I shall ever rejoice to meet Maun Singh"; but one of his suite was not so courteous, and shouted after the Raja of Amber, inviting him to bring Akbar when he next visited them, and describing the Emperor in terms that will not bear translation into modern English.

As soon as Maun Singh and his suite had set spurs to their horses, the ground where they had sat was sprinkled with water from the Ganges, to purify it from the defilement of their touch, and Pertap and the Mewar chiefs bathed and put on

clean garments. Then they went back to Komulmer, while the insulted Raja hurried to tell his grievances to his new lord. The slights to himself, the defiance of authority and the epithets bestowed upon the Emperor, were all faithfully reported. It was the last count in the long score against Pertap. When Maun Singh came back, he did in one sense answer the taunt of the Mewar chieftain, "and bring Akbar with him." The forces of Delhi were arrayed against Pertap, and Prince Selim led them, with Raja Maun as his chief counsellor.

Gradually the Muslim army closed about the Rana, who was shut within the district near Udaipur—an area of about eighty square miles, thickly wooded, hilly, and intersected by mountain streams. The ground was too broken for an army to be drawn up in order of battle, save in a few places at the base of the hills, where it suddenly widened into a level plain. Amongst these was the plain of Huldighat, from which a pass led into the mountains where Pertap had his last refuge; and here it was that the two armies met, in the month of July 1576.

As Pertap rode forth upon his beloved war-steed "Chytuc," the royal umbrella over his head, the sun's disk carried behind him, after the wont of his race, any of whom would have thought shame to disguise himself and enter into the battle, the sight of the army opposed to him must have saddened even his dauntless spirit. The field-artillery, the dromedary corps bearing swivel-guns, and the other engines of war which Akbar had

gathered against him, were of small account to a Rajput, who still placed most of his trust in the valour of his horsemen ; but in those serried ranks that waited the signal on either side, brother was set against brother, kinsman against kinsman. Sukta, whom he had banished from Mewar, was somewhere in that array ; Mahabat Khan, one of the generals in command, was Pertap's nephew, the child of his brother, Sugra. Prince Selim was the son of a Rajput mother, and by his side rode Maun Singh of Amber, upon whom Pertap vowed to avenge himself, let the fortune of the day be what it might.

On Pertap's side were only 22,000 Rajputs —as brave warriors as ever drew sword, but few indeed to be pitted against the legions of Delhi—and some of the ever-faithful Bhils. The little wild people would not come down to battle ; it was against all their traditions, and they were not susceptible of military discipline. On the cliffs above the pass, behind rocks and trees they crouched, waiting to let fly their slender arrows, or to send great boulders of stone crashing down upon the heads of the enemy.

So far as may be gathered, there was little generalship shown on either side during the day. The Muslim strove to gain the pass that would give them the key to the mountains ; the Rajputs, with desperate, reckless valour, strove to keep it. Wherever the fight was fiercest, the crimson banner and the State umbrella might be seen, and Pertap dealt blows all around him, careless

of his own life, his one desire to cross swords with Raja Maun. As he raged across the field, followed by a bodyguard of his chieftains, he caught sight of a throng gathered round a war elephant, richly trapped and decorated, and knew that beneath the howdah was Prince Selim. In an instant the imperial guards were mown down by the Rajput swords, the driver of the elephant was killed where he sat, and only the steel plates of the howdah saved the Prince from Pertap's blows. Wilder and wilder grew the fight. The troops of Delhi gathered to save Akbar's son; the sons of Mewar rallied about their lord. Pertap was bleeding from three spear wounds and three sword cuts, and a shot had pierced his armour. Chytuc, his horse, reared up against the elephant, which, unchecked by the driver, from whose dead hand the goad had fallen, suddenly turned, broke through the press, and charged madly to another part of the field.

Prince Selim having thus escaped, his men flung themselves upon the Rana. The sheer weight of numbers was beginning to tell, and three times the Rana was surrounded, and all but borne to the ground. Then the Jhala chief, who rode beside him, seized the golden sun from the standard-bearer, wheeled, and galloped away, followed by the enemy, who knew that sun might only be carried behind the Rana. Pertap's bridle was seized, and worn out and dizzy, he was hurried from the field, while the Jhala chief fought on. No son of Bappa Rawul

could have faced an enemy more boldly than he; they pulled him down as the wolves pull down a dying lion, and 150 of his vassals died with him, to save the prince whom he loved. There, too, died the Tuar chieftain, the sole survivor of the storm of Chitor, with his son, and his clansmen, and 500 of Pertap's kinsmen. Of the 22,000 Rajputs who had mustered to battle in the morning, only 8000 went home.

Away from the battlefield towards the hills, where alone he might find shelter, rode Pertap, without a single follower. All were fighting to cover his escape, or had themselves fled by other ways. Bitterly did he envy those who were free to die for Mewar, knowing that he must live for her, since his son, Umra, could not carry on his work. As Chytuc picked his way among the stones and rocks, the sound of hoofs caught the Rana's ear, and he turned to look behind him. Two horsemen were pursuing him, and a third was following at a greater distance.

Chytuc had been wounded in the battle, but he answered bravely to his master's touch. On they rode, the path growing more and more difficult, until it was crossed by a swift stream that came brawling down from the hills. Chytuc gathered his legs under him, rose in the air, and bore his master safely to the further side; the two horsemen drew rein on the nearer bank, and hesitated to follow. A stumble, a fall among those slippery stones might mean death, and they were dealing with a desperate man. It would

be better to wait until more of their number came up.

On rode Pertap, sore and stiff with his wounds; Chytuc was flagging, and he himself felt that he could endure no longer. Again the sound of a horseman riding at breakneck speed arose behind him. Escape was hopeless for a wounded man and a wounded steed, and the Rana turned to bay.

"Ho, rider of the blue horse!" called a well-known voice in the speech of Mewar; "canst tell me how a man feels when he is flying for his life?"

Pertap had no words to speak, for it was Sukta whom he saw before him—Sukta, who had leagued with his enemies. Was this day to see the end of the fight that the Brahmin had stayed long ago? As he checked his horse, Chytuc quivered, stumbled, and rolled over on the ground.

"Ho, brother!" called Prince Sukta cheerily, "no need to gaze behind thee! I left the chiefs of Khorasan and Multan beside yon stream; they will trouble thee no more."

As he spoke, the quarrels, the bitterness of past years melted away, and the brothers fell into each other's arms. Sukta hurriedly explained, that when he saw Pertap flying alone and wounded, he forgot all save that they were of one blood, and had ridden after him to give help. Coming up with the chiefs of Khorasan and Multan on the edge of the stream, he had slain them both.

"Take my horse," he said, "and ride for safety. I must go back for a while to the camp, but I will join thee as soon as I may."

Scarce believing his ears, Pertap bent over his horse and began to unstrap the saddle. As he pulled at the buckles, Chytuc stretched himself out and died. There was no time to take farewell of faithful horse, or new-found brother; mounting Sukta's horse, Pertap once more rode on, and Sukta toiled back on foot to the camp of Delhi.

Bidden to explain his absence to Prince Selim, Sukta had a long and wonderful story at the end of his tongue. He had seen the rebel against our lord the Emperor escaping from the field, and, of course, had hurried in pursuit, with the chiefs of Khorasan and Multan, meaning to capture him, and lead him in chains to the Prince's feet. Unhappily, the rebel was as one possessed, and had slain the chiefs, and had well-nigh slain Sukta. Barely had Sukta escaped with life, and with the loss of his good steed, which had obliged him to return on foot, as the Prince could see.

Now Selim, cruel and capricious as he afterwards proved to be in many ways, had something of his father's generous mind, and his power of reading men. Not a word of this story did he believe, and when it came to an end he turned upon Sukta:—

"I swear to give thee thy life; tell me the truth."

All the spirit of his fathers flashed into Sukta's voice and eyes: "The burden of a kingdom is

on my brother's shoulders. I could not see his danger without defending him."

The result of this candour was that one day, when Pertap was dwelling in the bamboo huts he had raised beside the lake of Udaipur, there entered Prince Sukta, light-hearted as ever. Having been dismissed from the Emperor's service, he had determined to join his brother, but not to join him empty-handed. Gathering his men, he had surprised Bhynsror, then held by the Muslim, and he now offered it to Pertap as his gift.

Pertap at once granted it as a fief to Sukta and his descendants, and Bhynsror became the head-quarters of the Suktawuts, as Saloombra of the Chondawuts. The Suktawuts became a great and powerful clan, whose ambitions and jealousies were to distract Mewar, and from the day when their founder joined Pertap, their watchword has ever been "the barrier to Khorasan and Multan."

Another clan have a right to remember the day of Huldighat with special pride, the descendants of the Jhala chief. In memory of the time when their ancestor gave his life for his lord, all were addressed by the title of "Raj," and were allowed to sound their drums at the palace gates; their chief rode on the Rana's right hand, and bore the royal ensigns.

NOTE.

When Col. Tod was in Mewar, the Rana still strewed straw beneath his mattress, and covered his plate with leaves, in memory of Pertap's vow.

THE STORY OF RANA PERTAP

AFTER the battle of Huldighat, Prince Selim did not follow up his victory; he may have thought that Pertap was utterly crushed. Then came the rains, which made campaigning difficult and dangerous, if not impossible; the great army of Delhi withdrew, and the Rana was given time to breathe, and to collect the scattered remnants of his forces.

In the next spring, at the time of year when kings go forth to battle, Selim came again to finish his work. Again Pertap met him on the open field; and again the Rajputs were hopelessly defeated. Pertap, with a handful of men, flung himself into Komulmer, thinking that he was safe in the hold whence Pirthi Raj had so often mocked at his enemies.

But there was a secret foe amongst them more dangerous than all Akbar's hosts. There must have been some evil strain of treachery in the Deora chiefs of Mount Abu, since the days when one of them had given the poisoned sweetmeats to Pirthi Raj; the well from which the garrison drew their water was suddenly discovered to be polluted, and the chief of Mount Abu is said to have defiled it. Once more Pertap had to leave brave

men to die for him. Whilst he stole away through the forests and over the hills, his kinsman, the lord of Sonigurra, held the fortress to the last, and fell, sword in hand, at the head of the garrison. With them died the chief bard of Mewar, whose war-songs had often heartened Pertap's men.

One after another the fortresses of Mewar fell into the hands of Raja Maun and the imperial troops. Closely and more closely the hosts of Delhi pressed upon the Rana, blocking the end of every pass, hemming him in upon every side. Udaipur itself was taken by Mahabat Khan; nothing was left to Pertap but the cliffs of the eagle and the lair of the wolf. Driven to couch with wild beasts, he learned like them to hide, to lurk in wait, and like them to break from the toils and fall upon the hunters. Over and over again did his pursuers think to have trapped him; and over and over again they would beat the cover, find that their quarry was not there, and learn that he had been harrying his foes in another direction. Or, while they made their way through some mountain pass, believing Pertap to be far away, on a sudden a shrill call would echo from the hills around them, and from behind every bush and every rock would start an armed warrior, and the Rana would cheer his men to the strife. Once Pertap caught a whole division in this manner, and cut them off to a man. The Bhils, the wild men of the woods, were all his allies, and they were ears and eyes to his little force. Then sometimes when his plight seemed desperate,

the skies themselves would befriend him; the rains would descend in full tide, swelling the streams till they were impassable, washing away whatever, in default of a better, might be considered a road, and making the countryside so unhealthy, that Akbar's generals were fain to withdraw their troops before they were rotted with disease.

"Where the king is, there is his court," and Pertap was of those who are kings in exile, or on the throne, in a dungeon, or in a palace. His little band of followers were as devoted, as respectful, when they served him under the greenwood tree, as if he sat within the halls of Chitor. The meal they shared might be fruit gathered from the trees around them, or a few cakes made from the meadow grass; yet if the Rana broke a piece from his scanty rations and gave it to one of his chieftains, the gift was deemed as great an honour as in the proudest days of Mewar. There was no better school for courtesy and chivalry than was to be found with these half-starved, coarsely-clad warriors, who had not a roof under which to rest their heads, and carried their lives in their hand day by day. One word, and any of them could have been restored to wealth and honour, to lie softly and fare delicately, to ride to battle at the head of a squadron, and to marry wives, and to rear children to inherit his name. None spoke that word; so long as the Rana was true to himself, they would be true to him.

To add to the dangers and difficulties of his life, Pertap had with him his wife and his chil-

dren. Very early did his sons and daughters learn to bear hardships. Not only were they "rocked in a buckler and fed from a blade," they were hung in baskets from the trees when there were few to guard them, lest they should be carried off by tigers or wolves. About two hundred and fifty years afterwards, the mountaineers would still show little shelters amongst the woods, where Rana Pertap had hidden himself, and point to rings and bolts upon the trees where the royal nursery had been made. Besides the dangers from wild beasts, there were the dangers of capture by the enemy, and women and children sorely hampered a rapid flight. Once the babies were only saved from falling into the hands of Akbar's men by some of the kindly Bhils, who packed them up in great baskets, and hid them in the tin mines, feeding and caring for them until the hue-and-cry had gone by another way.

In the meanwhile, those of the Rajputs who had paid homage to Akbar fared well, and were received with honour at his court. A particular square in the city was given to them for their camping-place, and Akbar treated them with a kindness and courtesy that made submission easy, if it roused the indignation of stricter Muslim. Among the Rajput chieftains who came to Delhi were the two sons of the lord of Bikanir, Rae Singh and Pirthi Raj. Both were held in great honour by the Emperor, who had married Rae Singh's daughter to his son, Prince Selim. Pirthi

Raj, warrior and poet, was held to be the noblest of all the Rajput chieftains who had submitted to Akbar, and he was married to a beautiful and high-spirited wife, the daughter of Pertap's brother Sukta.

For his own amusement and that of his court, Akbar had commanded that a bazaar or fair should be held every month within his palace. His queens, his daughters, their attendants, and the ladies of the court were all obliged to be present, either to keep a stall at which they sold their own work and the work of their kin—which fetched the high prices usually commanded by royal industry—or to chaffer with the merchants' wives who brought goods from all parts of the empire. Only women were allowed to be present, but the Emperor was in the habit of disguising himself and mingling with the crowd. The Moghul historians say that he went to pick up information that might be useful to him, to "learn the value of merchandise," and the general opinions on public affairs and the character of the government officers. The Rajputs believed that he went for a more dishonourable purpose—to spy freely upon the beauty of the court ladies, and to make choice of whomsoever pleased him. This idea was so strongly fixed in their minds, that one of the first conditions made by the Rao of Boondi when he surrendered Ranthambhor to Akbar was that no Hara's wife or daughter should be ordered to attend this fair.

The wife of Rae Singh of Bikanir was generally

thought to have been noticed by Akbar at one of these fairs, with disastrous results. "She returned to her abode, tramping to the tinkling sound of ornaments of gold and gems upon her person;" so runs a poem in which Pirthi Raj laments his brother's dishonour. None the less, Pirthi Raj's wife was bound to go to the fair whenever it was held; and thus it befell that one day she was seen by the Emperor, who was at once overcome by her marvellous beauty.

The princess had made her purchases, and left the hall; she was hurrying through the network of dark ways leading none knows whither, little latticed rooms, void of occupant, silent passages that yet seem full of unheard whispers and unseen eyes, such as bewilder all who find themselves in the innermost corners of an Eastern palace. Suddenly, out of the darkness and the silence a man stood before her, blocking the way.

Well did she know the man and his purpose as she looked upon him; alone, unarmed, in the midst of his palace, what could a woman do against the Emperor?

But the daughter of Bappa Rawul was of a different stamp from her sister-in-law; joining her hands, she called upon "the Mother" to save her from worse than death. Then—so says Rajput story—"the Mother" heard her prayer, and appeared before her, borne by the tiger on which she rides to battle. In her hand she held a dagger, which she gave to the Mewar princess. Swift as a hawk, the brave woman turned upon

the Emperor; ere he could defend himself, or strike her down, she was holding the dagger to his throat. "If you would live," she cried, "swear that never again will you seek to wrong a Rajput woman." The Emperor took the oath and slunk away; the princess triumphantly returned to her husband.

Some time afterwards, Akbar summoned Pirthi Raj before him. The Emperor was in a transport of delight, and bade Pirthi Raj read a letter that he had just received. It was written by Pertap, and prayed that the Emperor would admit the Rana to his grace.

Although he had been forced to submit to Akbar, Pertap was the hero of Pirthi Raj's adoration. Even at the Court of Delhi, poets and warriors had been wrought to honour the man who preferred wounds and starvation to riches and ease—"Wealth and land will disappear, but the virtue of a great name lives for ever." To Pirthi Raj, who was of Rajput blood, "he who never bowed the head" to Akbar was almost divine; the world must end if Pertap had been conquered.

"What think you of this?" asked the Emperor, as Pirthi Raj flung down the letter. "That it is the work of one of his foes," burst out Pirthi Raj, with indignant grief. "I know him well; for your crown he would never yield. Let me write to him, to ask if he ever thought of submission."

Now Pertap had indeed written the letter in an impulse of weakness. The years had passed by, and with every year his plight grew worse instead

of better. His followers succumbed to wounds, or to their hardships, and the foe never ceased to harass them. Five meals in one day had to be left uneaten as soon as they were cooked, because the hunters were close upon their track. Pertap was once resting in the forest, when he heard a cry of distress from his little daughter. Her mother had given her a cake of bread; although she was still hungry the child had put aside half of it for the next meal, and a wild cat had stolen down from a tree, and carried it off.

Her piteous tears broke down Pertap's resolution. He had sacrificed and could sacrifice himself, giving up all that made life worth having; he could no longer bear to sacrifice wife and children, and the true friends who had forsaken home and kinsmen at his call. Surely they had done and suffered enough for honour's sake, and there was no shame in yielding when every one else had yielded, long ago. That day he wrote to Akbar, and offered to submit.

At length came the messenger from Delhi, with a letter addressed to Pertap. But it was no command to repair to Delhi with wife and children, and to bow before the Peacock Throne. Pirthi Raj was the writer; and his grief and dismay had flowed forth in verse:—

"The hopes of the Hindu rest on the Hindu; yet the Rana forsakes them. But for Pertap all would be placed on the same level by Akbar; for our chiefs have lost their valour, and our women their honour. Akbar is the broker in the market

of our race; all he has purchased, but the son of Udai who is beyond his price. What true Rajput would part with honour?[1] yet how many have bartered it away! Will Chitor come to this market? Though Pertap has squandered away wealth, yet this treasure has he kept. Despair has driven many to this mart, to witness their dishonour; from such infamy the descendant of Hamir alone has been preserved. The world asks, from what secret place does Pertap draw help? He has none, save the soul of manliness and his sword; with it, well has he maintained the Rajput's pride. This broker in the market of men one day will be over-reached; he cannot live for ever; then will our race come to Pertap for the seed of the Rajput to sow in our desolate lands. To him all look for its preservation that its purity may again become resplendent."

After reading this letter, Pertap gave up all thought of making his peace with the Emperor. His countrymen looked to him to uphold the honour of their race; cost what it might he would not fail them.

But it was plain to the Rana that he could hold out no longer in his present position. He made up his mind to leave Mewar, to think no more of regaining Chitor, and to lead his followers to find a kingdom in some other country. Babar himself, the great adversary of the Rajputs, had

[1] Lit., "would part with honour for nine days"—an allusion to the fair instituted by the Emperor, which was held on the ninth day after the chief festival of every month.

set them the example ; driven out from his home in Samarcand, he had founded a new kingdom at Kabul and then at Delhi. Word was sent throughout Mewar that the Rana would journey towards the Indus. All preparations were made, and those who would cast in their lot with him gathered about him. They came down from the hills, and had reached the borders of the desert, when a messenger came from Bhama Sah, the hereditary prime minister of Mewar. During their years of office, he and his forefathers had gathered riches enough to maintain five-and-twenty thousand men for twelve years ; he laid all at the Rana's feet, with a prayer that he would strike another blow for Mewar.

The imperial troops in city and fortress sat at their ease, believing that Pertap was struggling through the desert ; perhaps he had died, as so many died, through missing a well, or emptying the water-skins too soon, and the hot wind was piling the sands over his corpse. Suddenly, without note of warning, the summons had sped through forest and glen, and Pertap was again in their midst. From castle to fort, from camp to city he flashed and left nothing but dead bodies to mark his track.

"Pertap made a desert of Mewar ; he made an offering to the sword of whatever dwelt in its plains." Within the year, all Mewar was his, except Chitor, Ajmer, and one other place that still held for Akbar ; and then he turned to wreak his belated vengeance on Raja Maun. The chief

commercial town of Amber was sacked, and the spoil carried back to Mewar.

Akbar could do little to check the Rana ; the sympathies of every Rajput—except, perhaps, the aggrieved Maun Singh—were with Pertap, and outlying districts of the empire were giving trouble. In the north there were continual revolts ; in the south lay the Deccan, which, like every great King of Delhi, Akbar yearned to conquer. The Emperor was growing old ; he had lived a strenuous life, and there was small consolation to be found in his sons. Two drank themselves to death, and Prince Selim, after openly defying his father, caused Akbar's dearest friend and trustiest counsellor, the scholar Abu-l-Fazl, to be murdered. In the last years of his life, Akbar had ceased to trouble himself about the affairs of Rajast'han.

But he was destined to outlive the one enemy who had successfully defied him. Rana Pertap, too, was a broken man, disappointed and old before his time. For all his struggles he had not won back Chitor, and he had no hope for the future. As he sat in the temporary hut that he had built by the lake of Udaipur—for his vow forbade him to live in his father's palace—he brooded over the desolation of Chitor, and the weakness of his son and heir, Prince Umra. Once, when the Prince was leaving his father's hut, he had forgotten to stoop, and a bamboo caught his turban and dragged it from his head ; well did Pertap remember Umra's look of impatience and his hasty exclamation, and he felt that his son would

never have the self-sacrifice and the hardihood to bear what he had borne.

Pertap had endured war and wanderings without seeming to be the worse; now that the strain was over he could endure no more. The chiefs were summoned to Udaipur to hear his last commands; the head of the Chondawuts was surprised to hear a bitter groan from the dying Rana's lips. "What grieves your soul," he asked, "that it cannot depart in peace?"

Pertap gathered all his strength. "I may not die yet," he said. "I tarry for comfort, to receive a pledge that our country shall not be given over to the Toork."

He then told why he foreboded that Umra would not continue the struggle. "He will not be content to pass his days under this poor roof. These sheds will be pulled down, and ye will rear palaces instead. Living softly, ye will learn to love ease. For the sake of luxury, ye will barter the freedom of Mewar, for which we have shed our blood."

The chiefs with one voice protested that they would never yield. "No house will we build, until Chitor is regained and all Mewar is free. We swear it by the throne of Bappa Rawul; and we pledge ourselves to see that Prince Umra keeps the vow."

Scarcely were the words spoken when Pertap lay back upon his couch and died. For six-and-twenty years had he been called Rana of Mewar, and little of that time but had been spent in strife and in wandering.

NOTE.

It should be remembered that Tod drew his materials almost entirely from the Rajput chronicles and traditions, and that they are naturally prejudiced against Akbar. After consulting the authorities on the other side, it is difficult to believe that he who has been called "The noblest king that ever ruled India" could be guilty of such treachery to his allies and friends as is ascribed to him in the case of the wives of Rae Singh and Pirthi Raj. Later on, Tod makes Akbar die from eating a poisoned sweetmeat which he had intended for Raja Maun, of whom he was jealous—a Borgia-like end, more suitable for the villain in an opera than for the poor old man whose heart was broken by the worthlessness of his own sons.

THE STORY OF THE SIXTEEN SONS OF SUKTA

THE forebodings of Rana Pertap were soon realised. Scarcely was he laid in his grave before his son and the chieftains of Mewar began to forget their solemn vows. Umra had a due share of Rajput courage and Rajput pride, but he had spent all his life in wandering and privation, and was weary of maintaining an unequal strife. He was still young, and had all a young man's capacity for enjoyment, which his father had never allowed him to exercise. Now that Pertap's stern voice could no longer check or goad him, and Pertap's watchful eyes no longer noted every movement and gesture, Umra relapsed into self-indulgence, and did his best to atone for the hardships of his boyhood.

For some years he was allowed to enjoy himself undisturbed in the marble palace that he built by the lake of Udaipur, to lie upon soft cushions and watch the swaying forms of the dancing-girls, to gaze upon the great looking-glasses that were his favourite decoration for his halls. Akbar was dying of a broken heart, and thought no more of Rajast'han. But in 1605, Akbar, on his death-

bed, girt the sword of state about Prince Selim, the only one of his sons who had not fallen victim to wine or assassination. Selim, on his accession, took the name of Jehangir ("World-Grasper"), and in spite of habitual drunkenness, and other vices, proved a less unworthy son of his father than might have been expected. As a child of a Rajput princess, he was naturally tolerant to the Hindu religion. But to allow the Rajputs to worship as they pleased was one thing, to allow them to defy his supremacy was another, and in the early years of his reign he gathered an army and sent it against Mewar.

This roused all the old spirit of the Rajput chieftains. Their new luxuries were despised or forgotten, and they swore to meet the enemy and to triumph or to die as did their fathers. Mounting their war-steeds, they rode to Udaipur, and thronging into the Rana's presence, with Saloombra, the head of the Chondawuts, as their spokesman, they called upon Umra to lead them against the Muslim.

But Umra lay indolently upon his cushions, and made no response to their salutations. He had had enough of fighting ere his moustache was grown; let them be wise, and cease this continual strife with Delhi, that could end only in their ruin.

Chief lowered grimly upon chief, and murmured under his breath; Saloombra wasted no more time in words. The carpet spread upon the floor of the hall was kept down at the four corners

by heavy brass weights. Seizing one of these, Saloombra hurled it with all his force at the great mirror brought from a far western country that was the Rana's pride. The glass starred and shivered from end to end, and the splinters flew about the hall. "To horse, chiefs!" cried Saloombra, catching the Rana by the arm, and dragging him roughly to his feet. "To horse, and save from infamy the son of Pertap."

It was of no avail for Umra to chafe and to storm, crying out against the chief as a traitor. Saloombra cared nothing for threats or for abuse, and all the greatest chiefs of Mewar were on his side. They mounted the Rana upon his horse, and led him away from the palace, while Umra wept with sheer rage.

They were not out of sight of Udaipur when Umra recovered himself with rare dignity. He now returned the salute of each and all, asking them to forgive him for having omitted to do so in his fit of ill-temper, and he thanked Saloombra for having thus roughly recalled him to a sense of his duty. "Lead on," he ended; "ye shall have no cause to regret your former sovereign."

Such a spirit in the Rana could not fail to hearten his followers. The forces of Delhi were beaten in a pitched battle, and the chieftains of Mewar went home in triumph with their leader. Two years later, Jehangir renewed the strife, and his army being again defeated, he determined to ruin Mewar by stratagem. Knowing how closely the ruined city of Chitor was bound up with all

the history and tradition of Mewar, how many lives had been lost in its defence, and how often Rajput chiefs had sworn to win it back from the accursed "Toork," he declared that he now restored it to Rajput keeping. He took Sugra, the renegade brother of Pertap who had cast in his lot with Delhi, called him Rana of Mewar, and sent him to keep his court among the ruins of Chitor.

It was a shadow-king ruling in a land of shadows. To a son of the royal house those despoiled palaces and desecrated shrines were thronged with phantoms from the past ages. Memory and tradition held countless terrors for the son of Bappa Rawul, who came to take his place in his father's home, with a guard of Muslim warriors. For seven years Sugra strove against hereditary influences, alone amongst the wild beasts and the ghosts, with none to support him save the men whom he had brought from Delhi. Then, we are told, "the god of war," impatient of the usurper, gave clear signs of his wrath, and Sugra's nerves gave way. He privately sent word to Umra that he was ready to deliver Chitor into his hands, and fled from the city, a disgraced and broken man. His son, Mahabat Khan, was hereafter to win renown as one of the greatest of the imperial generals; for Sugra himself there was nothing left but shame and death. Some time after the surrender of Chitor he slunk back to Delhi, and showed himself in the audience-chamber. Jehangir recognised him, and reproached him

with his double treachery. Sugra made no answer in words, but drew his dagger, stabbed himself, and fell dead before the Emperor, scorned alike by Muslim and by Rajput.

The surrender of Chitor was the signal for a fresh outburst of activity against Delhi. Chitor itself was useless from all practical points of view; once the strongest city of Rajast'han, it was now past all hope of defence, and Umra was forced to leave it to the wild beasts. There were other towns and fortresses in Moghul keeping that were of more real importance, and he led his men against them.

It was at this time that he received a new band of recruits. Had he known all that was to come upon Mewar from the sixteen brothers, who rode to Udaipur, from a remote part of the country, to fight with him against the enemy, he would have cursed the day that brought them into his camp. But he needed every man that could bear arms, and he knew only that they were the sons of a chieftain to whom his father had owed life and throne.

Sukta, whose shout, "Ho! rider of the blue horse!" had rung so cheerily in the ears of Rana Pertap on the fatal day of Huldighat, after his reconciliation with his brother, had settled at Bhynsror, which he had won from the Moghul, and there reared a large and turbulent family. No less than seventeen sons stood around his deathbed when the old warrior ended his days, in the castle on the rock where the Chumbul joins another

stream. As soon as the breath was out of his father's body, Bhanji, the eldest son, suggested that his sixteen brothers should go forth to perform the funeral rites, while he remained behind to garrison the castle.

The younger brothers dutifully made no objection. The corpse was burned on the pyre, with all due observances, and then the mourners, having purified themselves, hurried back to Bhynsror—to find the castle gates shut and barred against them, while their elder brother informed them, through a convenient loophole, that there were too many mouths to feed at home as it was, and that they might shift for themselves.

Again the sixteen accepted the decree. Let Bhanji give them their war-steeds and their arms, and they would trouble him no more. So they rode away, with the three things that a Rajput holds most dear—his steed, his sword, and his love—to seek their fortunes, like princes in a fairy tale. Achil was chosen to be their leader, and his right-hand man was Ballo, the strong.

They intended to make their way to Edur, a district to the south of Mewar, then held by a branch of the Rahtores of Marwar. Before they could reach their journey's end, Achil's wife was taken ill and could go no further. Vainly did Achil seek a resting-place for her; the chieftain whom he begged for shelter churlishly refused to let the woman stay under his roof until her sorrowful hour had passed. The rain was falling

in torrents, and their plight was desperate. Seeing a ruined temple by the roadside, the brothers carried the woman thither, and placed her in a corner, hoping to shelter her from the cold and the wet. At the critical moment Ballo lifted his eyes to the roof, and saw that a great stone beam had been loosened by the heavy rains, and was slowly sinking upon her. Standing directly underneath the falling mass, he propped it with his head, and thus held it up until his brothers could cut down a tree and drive it under the beam.

"The Mother of Births," to whom the temple had been reared, took care of those who sought her protection; Achil's wife gave birth to a boy, who was called "Assa" or "Hope" by his father, and neither mother nor child was the worse for that night. The lords of Edur received the brothers with great kindness, and the sons of Sukta had lived for some time on the lands granted to them, when the Prime Minister of Mewar passed through the district on his return from a pilgrimage. He pitched his camp near the place where the brothers dwelt, and when a violent storm arose which threatened to overturn the tent in which his wife was sleeping, remembering the time of their own trouble, Achil and his kin hurried out, and saved the lady from fright and injury.

The Prime Minister overwhelmed them with thanks, and bade them come with him to Udaipur; he would take upon himself to answer for it to Bhanji. But Achil stood upon their dignity. If

the Rana, their cousin, needed their services, and sent for them, they would answer the summons; otherwise, they would stay where they were.

When the Rana Umra was gathering his forces for a campaign against Delhi, the Prime Minister reminded him of the sons of Sukta, with the result that all the sixteen soon made their appearance in his camp among the hills. Bhanji was there already with his troop, but head of his house and lord of Bhynsror as he was, no one heeded him. All the royal favour was bestowed upon his younger brothers, who were foremost in everything that had to be done, and Ballo's giant strength marked him out above the rest. Was the Rana camped on the hillside on a freezing night, Ballo toiled like any coolie to cut logs and build up a fire. Did the Rajput troops fall in with the enemy, it was Ballo who towered over the field, and drove back the men of Delhi. In an overmastering impulse of delight with his new allies, the Rana vowed that when next he drew up his army in battle array, Ballo and his brothers should lead the vanguard.

Now, to lead the vanguard of Mewar had been the hereditary right of Saloombra and the Chondawuts, ever since the day when Prince Chonda had cleared Chitor of his brother's supplanters. But Saloombra was not present to remonstrate with the Rana, and no one else durst interfere.

The troops were bivouacking in the open air, and the head of the Chondawuts had lain down to take a little rest, before meeting the enemy on the

next day. No sleep could be got, for the bard of his clan was wandering up and down, repeating incessantly at the top of his voice the watchword of the Chondawuts: "The portal of the ten thousand towns! The portal of the ten thousand towns!"

"What do you mean by making all that noise?" called the exasperated chieftain, at last. "Be still and let me sleep. Why should you din that cry for ever in our ears? The foe is not at hand."

"I cry our watchword perhaps for the last time," retorted the bard. "'Tis likely ye may never hear it again. To-morrow it may be taken from you, and given, with the vanguard, to the Suktawuts."

When Saloombra understood what had happened he was indeed wroth. Springing to his feet he sought Umra's presence, vowing that never should the rights of his clan be given to another house, even if the brothers were near of kin to the Rana.

The Suktawuts, on the other hand, were equally tenacious of their privileges. Prince Chonda's days were far away; his services had been rendered long ago. Rana Umra with his own mouth had bade them lead the vanguard, since they and their father had served him and his father, and lead it they would, despite the Chondawuts.

It lacked little to make the rival clans rush at each other's throats, and fight out their jealousies there and then, heedless of the Rana or of the enemy; but Umra stayed them. "Cease this

wrangling," he said, "and hear my decision. Whosoever is first within the walls of Ontalla, his clan shall lead the vanguard of Mewar."

Now Ontalla was one of the strongest fortresses still held by an imperial garrison. It stood about eighteen miles east of Udaipur, commanding the road that leads to Chitor, and was girt about by towers and walls, beneath which flowed a river. The governor's quarters were in the midst, a fort within a fort, and the only approach was through a single gateway.

Ere the break of dawn, the two clans had started on their way. The sixteen brothers were the first to reach Ontalla and to lead their men to the assault, and joyful were they to see no sign that the Chondawuts were near. But when they prepared to scale the walls, they found to their dismay that in the hurry and excitement of starting, they had forgotten to bring ladders with them.

The only way was by the gate, and on the gate the Suktawuts flung themselves, knocking, battering, hewing, while above the din and the crash their war-cry rose again and again. "The barrier to Khorasan and Multan!" The garrison, roused from their slumbers, hurried to the spot, and the struggle grew hotter with every moment. At last Achil thought hat some impression had been made upon the gates, and that one charge from his war elephant might break them in. He gave the order to the mahout, who plied his goad, and the elephant swung forward.

But when he came up to the gates, the great beast drew back, and neither endearments, curses, nor sharp steel could make him charge. From top to bottom, every foot of those gates was covered with iron spikes, and the elephant knew well that even his thick skull and hide would be pierced through and through, did he dash himself against them. Again and again did the driver urge him on; he stood immovable while the strife raged about him.

Then, above all the clamour, rose a distant shout that all knew and hated: "The portal of the ten thousand! the portal of the ten thousand!" The Chondawuts were making their way into the fortress. In desperate haste, Achil flung himself from his elephant, and stood before it, his back against the iron spiked gates. "Drive thy beast against my body," he cried to the mahout, "or thou diest on the instant."

Once more the goad was lifted; the elephant rushed heavily forwards, and plunged against Achil. The cruel iron spikes pierced the human flesh; the elephant, untouched, crashed through the gate, and the Suktawuts followed him, over Achil's dead body.

The Chondawuts, at their first outsetting, had been unlucky; in the darkness they strayed from the road and floundered into a marsh, where they plunged and splashed for some time, seeing the dawn break, and grimly foreboding that the Suktawuts were gaining a footing within Ontalla. At last a shepherd passed by, and willingly or

unwillingly, was made their guide. They struggled out of the marsh, and at length beheld the towers of the fortress frowning down upon them. Saloombra had remembered the ladders, and in a few moments the Chondawuts were scaling the walls of Ontalla.

By this time the garrison were thoroughly roused, and those who were not holding the gateway against the Suktawuts, swarmed out upon the battlements. As fast as the ladders were planted they were overturned, or the assailants were shot or hurled down as they mounted. One of the first to fall was Saloombra himself. And over all, as if to mock them, came the distant shout of their rivals, "The barrier to Khorasan and Multan!"

Among the Chondawuts was one of great strength and reckless daring, everywhere dreaded and famed, whether as a slayer of men or of wild beasts—the chief of Deogurh. When he saw his leader fall, he stooped over the corpse, bound it in his own shawl, slung it over his shoulders, and sprang up the ladder. Shot rained about him, swords flashed in the air, but neither lead nor steel could touch the "Mad Chief." Leaping on to the battlements, he poised his burden in his arms. "The vanguard to the Chondawuts!" he cried, "we are first within Ontalla"—and he flung the body of his chief within the walls.

The Chondawuts followed their leader in death as in life, and poured over the battlements while the garrison wavered. Just at that moment

through the gateway came another tide of invasion—the Suktawuts, for whom Achil's self-devotion had made an entrance. Together the rival clans chased the flying Moghuls, and the golden disk of Mewar once more waved over the walls of Ontalla.

The besiegers cut their way to the inmost room of the citadel, where they found two of the Moghul officers calmly seated, absorbed in a game of chess. Yes, they had heard a noise outside, but no one imagined that Ontalla could be taken, and they had not troubled themselves about it; it now seemed that they had been mistaken, but would their foes of their courtesy give them leave to finish the game, which had reached a most interesting stage? The Rajputs assented, and stood by, leaning on their weapons, still panting from their labours, while the Moghuls quietly played out their game. Then the players rose, and were taken from the room, and put to death.

A special messenger had been sent to tell the Rana that Ontalla was taken, and in a few hours Umra arrived at the fortress. About the walls, before the gateway, and over the battlements, lay the corpses of the besiegers. Saloombra, the first to enter the fortress, lay dead amongst his enemies. Achil's body, riddled with wounds, was stretched beside four of his brothers, of whom Ballo alone was yet breathing. In grief and pride, Umra stooped over the strong man whose death had been caused by royal favour. Ballo's dying hand

feebly made a salutation to his prince. "Double gifts, fourfold sacrifice," he murmured with his last breath.

The words were caught up by the bard of the Suktawuts, who, of course, had ridden with them to Ontalla. "Double gifts, fourfold sacrifice! The barrier to Khorasan and Multan!" he shouted aloud, and ever since then Ballo's last words have formed part of the war-cry of the Suktawuts. It was all that Ballo's clan gained by the storming of Ontalla. The Chondawuts kept their ancient right to lead the vanguard of Mewar. Thus gloriously began the rivalry between the two clans that was to cost more to Rajast'han than all the armies of Delhi.

NOTE.

It is not made clear who was the Suktawut whose devotion opened the gates of Ontalla; Colonel Tod calls him "their leader." Bhanji was of course the real Suktawut leader, but, if present at the storming, he survived long afterwards. Ballo was Umra's favourite, and was most conspicuous both in building the Rana's fire at night, and in skirmishing with the enemy next day; but Tod says that the Suktawuts entered the gateway over the hero's lifeless corpse, while Ballo lived to bid farewell to Umra. Achil was elected leader by the brothers when they were shut out of Bhynsror, and thus he is probably the person indicated, as he was among the five who died at Ontalla.

The action of the "Mad Chief" recalls that of the "good Lord James of Douglas" when he flung the Bruce's heart into the thickest of the fray; while for the quarrel of the clans as to precedence on the battlefield, compare the claim of the Macdonalds to be stationed on the right of the army, and their fatal sullenness on the day of Culloden because the post of

honour was given to the Athole brigade. In reading the Annals of Rajast'han, the ordinary Western student is continually reminded of similar incidents in Scottish history or tradition—so much so, that the stories seem to run of their own accord in the phrases of Scott, and such words as "cateran," "reiver," "masterless man," and the like obtrude themselves into the company of rajas, tigers, and charuns.

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THE ALLIANCE OF DELHI AND MEWAR

ONCE roused to a sense of his duty, Rana Umra showed himself a worthy son of his father. He fought no less than seventeen pitched battles with the Emperor's forces, and repeatedly gained the advantage. Parviz, the third son of Jehangir, who was sent against him with an army, had to be recalledto Delhi, after suffering total defeat.

But this could not last for ever. The forces of the empire were practically inexhaustible, while Mewar had been engaged in a struggle for life and death almost without breathing space, ever since the reign of Udai Singh. The contest could not go on. If Jehangir were beaten back in one place, he had but to hold up his finger for another army to replace that which had been worsted; the Rajputs were at the end of their resources. When in the year 1613 Jehangir marched on Ajmer, and sent his son, Shah Jehan, before him to prepare the way, Umra must have felt that the end had come. Only a handful of men came in answer to his summons; the rest had died on the battlefields that covered the length and breadth of Mewar.

For some few months the Rana still obstinately held out. Jehangir's own diary tells the story of the closing scenes. "On the commencement of the ninth year (1614), while seated on my throne, in an auspicious moment the elephant 'The Arrogant-of-the-Earth,' with seventeen others, male and female, captured from the Rana, was sent by my son and presented before me. The next day I went abroad mounted on 'The-Arrogant-of-the-Earth,' to my great satisfaction, and distributed gold in great quantity."

The "perpetual over-running" of the imperial armies, the capture of the wives and families of many of the Mewar nobles, and the death of so many of his chieftains, broke down the Rana's pride, and the loss of his favourite war elephant was the last stroke. The son of Pertap sent a humble message to the son of Jehangir; if he might be forgiven and taken into the Emperor's grace, he would submit, and let his heir wait upon the Emperor as did other Hindu princes.

Jehangir was overcome with delight. "I was greatly rejoiced at this event happening under my own reign, and I commanded that these, the ancient possessors of the country, should not be driven from it. The fact is, Rana Umra Singh and his ancestors were proud and confident in the strength and inaccessibility of their mountainous country and its strongholds, and had never beheld a king of Hindustan, nor made submission to any one. I was desirous in my own fortunate time the opportunity should not

slip my hands; instantly therefore on the representation of my son I forgave the Rana, and sent a friendly firman that he might rest assured of my protection and care, and imprinted thereon, as a solemn testimony of my sincerity, my five fingers.[1] I also wrote to my son, that by any means which it could be brought about, to treat this illustrious one according to his own heart's wishes."

Submission was indeed made as easy as possible to the broken-hearted Rana. Cruel and hasty as Jehangir could be in his fits of drunkenness, "this over-growne Eliphant," as an English visitor calls him, had the instincts of a gentleman, and spared the feelings of his fallen enemy in every way. No Rana of Mewar, it was agreed, should ever be required in person to attend the Emperor; on succeeding to the throne, each Rana was to go without the walls of his capital to receive the imperial decree which confirmed his accession, and Mewar was to send a levy of a thousand horse to the imperial forces. This was all that was asked, and when Umra pleaded that his age prevented him from coming to pay homage to the Emperor, the excuse was graciously accepted.

There was no possibility of escaping the formal visit to the Emperor's son, and Umra presented himself before Shah Jehan, and "taking him by the knee," begged to be forgiven. He was

[1] "I have seen the identical firman in the Rana's archives," says Tod. "The hand being immersed in a compost of sandalwood is applied to the paper, and the palm and five fingers are yet distinct."

kindly received, and his suite were dismissed with many costly presents—such as horses and jewelled aigrettes. Shah Jehan, himself three parts Rajput by descent—his mother was a Cuchwaha princess of Amber—was fascinated by Umra's mournful dignity. The grave reserved youth, who was never seen to smile, did all that was in his power to show honour to the old man whom he had defeated. He wrought vainly to persuade Umra to receive the Emperor's firman outside the gates of Udaipur; let the Rana show but this sign of respect, and every Mahommedan garrison should be withdrawn from Mewar. But Umra refused to do this; won by Shah Jehan's noble qualities, he consented to visit him as a friend, and he would do no more.

Shortly afterwards, when Umra's son, Kurrun, was taken to do homage to the Emperor at Ajmer, Shah Jehan sent a special request that Kurrun's place should be at the Emperor's right hand. Jehangir patronisingly notes that he found Kurrun "extremely shy, and unused to the pageantry and experience of a court." Perhaps it was more than shyness that made the young mountaineer stiff and ill at ease in the presence of the jovial Emperor, who swallowed opium like any Rajput, and drank in the evenings with the English sailor, Captain Hawkins, and other boon companions, until he was unable to carry his hand to his mouth at supper time. By way of encouraging his guest, Shah Jehan gave him a valuable present every day, and took him to the Queen's court,

where he received an elephant, a horse, and a sword from Nur Jehan, the Persian who ruled Emperor and empire. Jewelled daggers and rings, steeds of Irak, pearl necklaces, hawks, carpets, perfumes, and golden vessels were all heaped by Shah Jehan on his new vassal. "From the day of his repairing to my court to that of his departure," reckons the Emperor, "the value of the various gifts I presented him exceeded ten laks of rupees [one hundred and twenty-five thousand pounds], exclusive of one hundred and ten horses, five elephants, or what my son gave him."

It was a poor exchange for the independence of Mewar. So must Prince Kurrun have felt, among all the splendours of the Imperial Court, and so, still more strongly, felt his father. It was of no avail that all Mewar was restored to the Rana, free of invasion and attack, as it had not been since the days of Sanga, if from henceforth the Rana of Mewar must be "the man" of the Emperor of Delhi. The presents that continually came from Delhi for the Rana and his family were only a mockery. Of what good were war-steeds and arms to the chieftains of Mewar, if they must be used in the Emperor's service? What pleasure could there be for Umra in gazing on the golden statues sent to him from Delhi by the hand of his little grandson, Juggut Singh, whose heart the Emperor had won "with presents and kindness," when he knew that his own statue and that of his son were gleaming in white marble in the royal

pleasure-garden at Agra, a visible sign of the degradation of Mewar?

It was more than Umra could bear; all his life he had fought, first by his father's side, and then as the leader of the army of Mewar, to keep their country's honour untarnished, and this was how it had ended. When Kurrun returned from his visit to the Emperor's court, Umra assembled all the chieftains of Mewar, and told them that his day was over; since he could reign only as the Emperor's vassal, he would reign no longer. With his own hands he made the *teeka* on his son's forehead—"I leave the honour of Mewar to you," he said; and then he left the palace, never to return. About half a mile beyond the city wall, by the shores of a lake, stood the palace built by Udai Singh after the loss of Chitor. Here Umra shut himself up, taking no more part in the affairs of his kingdom; he was never again seen outside the gates, until, five years later, his dead body was carried forth to be burned on the pyre.

From that time began a new era for Mewar; instead of remaining outside the sphere of Delhi, a self-contained and self-governing kingdom, it was drawn into the whirlpool of imperial politics, whether for good or for ill. Happily for the chief state of Rajast'han, at the outset of its alliance with Delhi it was in good hands. Legend and story have passed over Kurrun, to dwell about the forms of other princes who were endowed with more striking personalities;

the impression left by what little is said of him, is that of an honourable man, of sound common sense and clear head, who shaped his course with judgment, and kept the land in peace and prosperity during the eight years of his reign.

Mewar was in great favour with its conqueror; its heir-apparent was always placed by him on his right hand, above all the other princes of Hindustan, and its chief nobles were given precedence over those belonging to other states. A warm friendship sprang up between Shah Jehan and Prince Bheem, Kurrun's younger brother, who commanded the levy of troops sent by Mewar to the Imperial service; at Shah Jehan's request, Bheem was given the title of Raja, and the lands of Thoda in fief from Jehangir. It was not long, however, before the Emperor began to regret his generosity.

Jehangir had designed as his successor his third son, Parviz, for the all sufficient reason, that the young man could drink level with himself. Nur Jehan, the Empress, preferred another of Jehangir's sons, but specially detested Shah Jehan, who was too grave to please his father, and too clever to suit his stepmother. Shah Jehan, fully alive to the situation, wove his intrigues with the assistance of Bheem and of Bheem's friend and brother-in-arms, Maun Singh, the chief of the Suktawuts. Jehangir began to suspect that something was amiss, and resolved to separate the friends. By way of sending Bheem into an honourable exile, he appointed

him Governor of Gujarat; this, we are told, "was distinctly refused"—those who know the Rajput temper can guess how distinctly—and Shah Jehan and his allies flamed at once into open rebellion. Parviz, whom all Rajputs detested for his cruelty in his unsuccessful campaign against Rana Umra, was slain, and Shah Jehan took up arms in defence of his rights. With him were Prince Bheem, the Suktawut clan, and the Imperial General, Mahabat Khan, who was himself as much a Rajput as any of them.

Jehangir mustered an army, and went forth with many misgivings to chastise his son. The sympathies of most Rajputs were on the side of the princely youth who had shown himself to be so magnanimous a foe. The Raja of Marwar, Guj Singh, was the father of Shah Jehan's mother, and it was a doubtful question whether he would choose to support son-in-law or grandson.

Great was the rejoicing when the old Raja was seen riding into Jehangir's camp with all his Rahtores, and such was the Emperor's relief, that he took Guj Singh's hand and kissed it before all the host. When, however, the two armies were drawn up opposite to each other near Benares, the Emperor was so ill-advised as to give the leading of the vanguard to Jey Singh, the "Mirza Raja" of Amber. No Rahtore could be expected to endure this, and Guj Singh made his protest by drawing off his force and sulking in the background; if the Rahtores might

not lead the vanguard, they would not strike a single blow for Jehangir.

It was at this moment that Bheem of Mewar took it into his head to interpose. He sent a message to Raja Guj: "Why do the Rahtores stand aside? Either throw in your lot with us, or draw your swords." The result was as might have been expected; the old Raja was not going to sit still under the taunts of a youth. The Rahtores did draw their swords, and with such good effect that Shah Jehan's cause was lost for that day. Bheem lay dead upon the field; Maun Singh, grievously wounded, was borne away by the Suktawuts; and Shah Jehan and Mahabat Khan fled for their lives to Udaipur.

Rana Kurrun, with his usual good sense, had abstained from taking part in the rebellion, although he had no control over his brother's actions; he would be true to the Emperor's salt. Now that the Moghul prince was a hunted fugitive, he received him with all honour and courtesy, seeming glad to repay former kindnesses. A fair palace was raised on an island in the lake, where Shah Jehan and his Muslim followers might live as they pleased, without offending Rajput prejudices. Every comfort, every luxury was to be found there; even a throne had been carved from a single block of marble for the homeless wanderer. The crescent stood above the dome of the palace, and in its court a chapel was erected to a Muslim saint for whom the prince had a special devotion.

In spite of all the kindness shown to him, Shah Jehan's life at Udaipur must have been clouded by sad thoughts—Prince Bheem, the brother of his host, had fallen in his cause; and Maun Singh had refused to survive his brother-in-arms. Knowing the love between the two comrades, Maun Singh's attendants long concealed Bheem's death, and daily brought their master dishes of food which, they said, had been sent by Bheem. Through some mischance the truth at last reached Maun Singh, and immediately he tore off the bandages from his body, which was scarred by more than eighty wounds, like that of Rana Sanga, and laid himself down to die.

For the next few years Shah Jehan led a wandering life, sometimes in one place, sometimes in another, but making his headquarters at Udaipur. Hoping to win his end by conciliation, he made submission to his father, and even sent his two sons, Dara and Aurangzib, as hostages to the Emperor's court. But Mahabat Khan, his fellow-rebel, had less faith in diplomacy than in sudden action, and in conjunction with the Suktawuts and others of the Mewar warriors, he planned and carried into effect one of the most daring feats of arms ever devised by a Rajput.

Jehangir had summoned Mahabat Khan to court to answer various charges of oppression and embezzlement. The general could guess what was intended, and for some time declined to appear. The Emperor, however, insisted; and in due

course of time was told that the general had ridden into camp, attended by a bodyguard of five thousand Rajputs.

Jehangir was at that time on his way to Kabul to put down an insurrection, and was about to cross the river Behat[1] by a bridge of boats. All the troops had passed over to the further side, and only the Emperor himself, Nur Jehan, and their personal attendants remained on the spot where the camp had been pitched, waiting to cross until the confusion was over, and the dust, trampled by so many feet, had subsided.

It was the hour before daybreak on a March morning; Nur Jehan was in her tent among her women; Jehangir lay on his couch sleeping off the effects of the last night's carouse, when the tread of feet and the clank of arms resounded in his ears, and he started up, to find the tent full of Rajput warriors. Involuntarily he clutched at his sword; then he recognised the face of the general whom he had sternly refused to see since his arrival in camp, and realised the position. "Ah! Mahabat Khan!" he cried. "Traitor! what is this?"

Deep were Mahabat Khan's prostrations before his master, and fluent his asseverations of humility and respect. The deceitfulness of his enemies, he said, had obliged him to take this means of gaining access to the imperial presence. Jehangir was furious, and inwardly vowed to teach the rebel a lesson; meanwhile he schooled himself to be

[1] *Behat*, better known as the Hydaspes.

courteous and even friendly, and the scene that followed was like a well-arranged fencing-bout.

First of all, Mahabat Khan suggested that, as it was near the Emperor's usual time for mounting his elephant, had he not better show himself, "to remove alarm and check the misrepresentations of the ill-disposed"? Jehangir agreed, and said that he would go into the other tent to dress himself. This meant communication with Nur Jehan, of whom Mahabat was far more afraid than of her husband, and the Emperor was politely urged to change his garments where he was. Jehangir made no difficulties, and after dressing himself, mounted his favourite horse. Again Mahabat Khan interposed; an elephant was the better conveyance, both for safety and for conspicuousness. The Emperor's mahout was cut down as he tried to make his way through the Rajput guards, and place his master on his own beast; Jehangir was placed on one of the general's elephants, between two armed Rajputs, and taken off to Mahabat's quarters. Resistance was useless; the only bridge was held by two thousand of the general's Rajputs, and Rajputs surrounded the royal tents. So Jehangir accommodated himself to circumstances, and, being allowed the attendance of the servant whose duty it was to carry his bottle and his glass, was soon contented.

The best man on his side was the shrewd ambitious Nur Jehan. As soon as she realised what had befallen the Emperor, she disguised herself in a mean dress, got into a common

palanquin, and crossed the bridge, unhindered by the guards, who thought her some poor camp-follower. When she was in safety among the imperial troops she sent for the generals, overwhelmed them with taunts and upbraidings for allowing their master to be carried off under their noses, and stung them to action.

A brave noble named Fedai Khan tried to rescue Jehangir in the night, but was foiled and barely escaped with his life, most of his companions being slain or drowned. Next morning Nur Jehan herself led the attack, mounted on her elephant, and armed with bow and quiver. The Rajputs had burned the bridge, and the imperial forces had to cross by a ford. Some were swept downstream and obliged to swim, all were drenched. "The Rajputs had the advantage of the ground; they poured down showers of balls, arrows, and rockets on the troops in the ford; and rushing down on those who were landing, drove them back into the water, sword in hand."

Mahabat and his Rajputs gained the day, but their triumph was not lasting. Foiled in her attempt to win by force, Nur Jehan tried more feminine devices; she boldly entered Mahabat's camp and demanded to share her husband's imprisonment. The general was so unwise as to allow it, and the Empress played off all her wiles upon the chieftains. Mahabat's insolence had disgusted some of his own allies, and though the troops were on the whole staunch to the general, they were jealous of the preference given on all occasions to the Rajputs.

The result of it all was that the Emperor one day found himself free, and Mahabat Khan and his Rajputs were obliged to withdraw.

In the meanwhile the Rana of Mewar had died, after an uneventful reign. "The wreath of Kurrun's renown was fading," sighed a Rajput bard, who did not appreciate the blessings of peace. He was succeeded by his son, Juggut Singh, "the lion of the world," who continued his father's friendship with Shah Jehan.

The Moghul prince was at Udaipur when messengers came with the news that Jehangir, soon after being freed from his captivity, had succumbed to an attack of asthma in the vale of Kashmir. It was in "the cloud saloon" of his island palace that the tributary princes of the empire paid homage to their new lord, Shah Jehan. At parting, the Emperor restored five alienated districts to Mewar, gave the young Rana a priceless ruby, and granted him leave to re-build the fortifications of Chitor, if he would.

Another memorial was left in Udaipur to remind men of the days when "the Magnificent" had sought refuge there. Shah Jehan's orange-coloured turban and his shield were preserved in a niche of the Mahommedan chapel, the turban still retaining the folds that it had when the Moghul took it from his head to exchange it for that worn by his host. The chapel was preserved with scrupulous reverence, and even in the darkest hours of Mewar, the lamp hanging before the saint's shrine never lacked oil.

For six-and-twenty years Juggut Singh ruled in perfect tranquillity. Shah Jehan, kindly and gracious to all his subjects, had naturally a special tenderness for Mewar, and the Rana could devote himself to beautifying his capital with palaces and gardens, without fear for the morrow. The swords of the Mewar chieftains must well-nigh have rusted in their scabbards; but the hour of doom was approaching, and the next generation was to see Rajput and Moghul locked in a death-grip such as had not been known since the days of Rana Pertap.

NOTE.

Elphinstone and Stanley Lane-Poole say nothing of Shah Jehan's exile in Udaipur, which Tod describes from Rajput tradition, and it is not easy to reconcile all the dates with each other. However, as history is told throughout these stories from the Rajput point of view, it matters the less; moreover, there is always the witness of the shield and the turban, which Tod saw with his own eyes.

SOME CHIEFTAINS OF MARWAR

IT was the pride of the Moghul emperors to see the great Rajput chieftains attending at their court, and many found the way thither. Some were sent as hostages or ambassadors by their prince; some came of their own accord; and some fled to Delhi, because they had made their own country too hot to hold them. In the field, whether they fought against strangers, or—as too often came to pass—against their brother Rajputs, they were indomitable, reckless of odds, and faithful to their salt. Within the city walls they were turbulent, quarrelsome, and a continual source of disturbance. Even if they bowed before the reigning Emperor, nothing would induce them to keep from brawling with his courtiers, and they were sometimes overcome by violent fits of passion—due to opium, or to the blood fury—in which the Emperor himself was not regarded as sacred. They were allotted a particular square within the city walls, where they pitched their camp when they came to Delhi, so as to isolate them as far as possible from the rest of the court, but even so their quarrels were incessant.

Among the Rajput chieftains who attended the court of Shah Jehan was Umra the Rahtore. He was the eldest son of Raja Guj of Marwar, and as such would have been the natural heir to the throne. But he was too turbulent, too restless, even for his father's not over-peaceable subjects. Ever since he outgrew boyhood, he had gathered about him a band of lawless youths, whose pranks were the vexation of the whole country-side. At last the people of Marwar laid a formal complaint before Raja Guj, entreating that Umra might be banished. Were Marwar destined to perpetual war, they said, no one could lead their armies better than the Prince, but so long as he and his roystering companions were within their borders, no one could enjoy the blessings of peace.

Raja Guj was quite unable to control his son, and yielded to public opinion. A solemn assembly of all the nobles of Marwar was called, and a decree was passed setting aside Umra from the succession to the throne, and banishing him for ever from the kingdom. Umra was led before the assembly and clothed in a black robe, a black shield was hung at his back, and a black sword was belted around him. A black horse stood saddled and bridled ready for his mounting, and he was bidden to ride whither he pleased so long as he never again set foot within the land of Marwar, where henceforth he had neither part nor lot.

The day was observed as a day of mourning throughout Marwar, and doubtless it was a time

of more than official grief, since many of the sons of noble houses deserted home and country to ride with their disinherited prince. Agra was of course the first place to which Umra betook himself, and there he told his story to Shah Jehan.

The Emperor, whose unruly sons were the trouble of his life, had a natural sympathy with Raja Guj, and he refused to interfere by ordering the decree of banishment to be revoked. Umra might serve him, if he pleased; and Umra, having nothing else to do, entered the imperial service, and prospered. In a short time he was captain of three thousand men, and raised to the rank of Rao, holding the province of Nagore as a fief from the Emperor.

Umra's business in life was war and fighting; his amusement was hunting. He wearied of the court routine, the daily *levée*, the long banquet, the state ceremonies, the posturing and singing of the dancing-girls, and craved to be galloping over the plains of Marwar after the wild boar, or stalking the tiger through the jungle. One day the Emperor missed him from his place in the Diwan-i-Am, the hall of public audience, and asked where he was. It was soon discovered that the Rao had left Agra, without asking leave.

At the end of a fortnight, having had "good hunting," Umra again showed himself at court, and was sternly reproved by the Emperor, who declared that he deserved to be heavily fined for going, none knew whither, without a word to any man. "I went to hunt," answered Umra

haughtily, "and it is of little use to fine one who has no wealth but this sword at his side."

This answer increased the Emperor's displeasure, and when Umra returned to his quarters he found awaiting him a most unwelcome visitor —Sallabhut Khan, the Paymaster-General, who came to collect the fine immediately. Umra stoutly declined to hand over a single rupee. High words followed, either party insulting the other as only an Oriental can, and the interview closed by Umra's turning Sallabhut Khan out of doors.

In great dudgeon the Paymaster hurried off to the palace, and complained that the Emperor had been defied and insulted by this accursed infidel. A breathless messenger brought command to Umra to answer for his misdeeds at once, and Umra, his sword on his thigh and a sharp dagger hidden in his sleeve, ruffled into the presence.

There, on his marble seat, among the inlaid tracery of flowers in jasper and cornelian, sat Shah Jehan, "his eyes red with anger," while before him bent Sallabhut Khan, voicing his grievance with no uncertain tone. At the sight of the man who had insulted him, all Umra's fury broke loose. Should he, a Rajput, sun-descended, be browbeaten by a cow-slaying Toork? Pushing his way roughly past the great lords, the "Omrahs" or Emirs who stood about the throne, he sprang upon the Paymaster, drawing the dagger from his sleeve. There was a quiver, a heavy fall, and Sallabhut Khan lay dead, stabbed to the heart. Ere any man could interfere, Umra had

unsheathed his sword and struck at the Emperor; the blow fell, but against one of the marble pillars, and the steel was shattered.

Then followed a scene of wild panic. The Emperor made his escape by a passage to the women's apartments, and Umra raged through the hall, as blindly and as terribly as a Malay who has "gone amok." He rained blows indifferently upon friend and foe, and no man durst stand before him. At last his own brother-in-law pretended to speak to him kindly, and while pouring out smooth words, contrived to stab him. The wound was mortal, but Umra still plied his dagger until his last breath.

Five of the Moghul Omrahs lay dead or dying beside him, and not yet had Shah Jehan's court done with Umra. The news had reached his retainers that he had fallen in the Diwan-i-Am, and putting on their saffron robes they hurried to avenge his death, led by sons of the two great tribes of Marwar, the Champawuts and the Koompawuts. They forced their way in through the "Bokhara Gate," and the floors of the palace were slippery with blood, as the handful of Rajputs flnng themselves upon the Moghuls. "The pillars of Agra bear testimony to their deeds, nor shall they ever be obliterated from the record of time; they made their obeisance to Umra in the mansions of the sun."

When one and all were lying dead on the bodies of their slain foes, across the reeking floor came Umra's wife, a princess of Boondi. Alone and

undismayed, she sought for her husband's body, and bore it from the palace, to be burned with it upon the funeral pyre.

The "Bokhara Gate" through which the Rajputs entered was walled up and never used again. Tradition whispered that it was guarded by a great snake that dwelt in the cracks of the wall. At the beginning of the nineteenth century an officer of the Bengal Engineers ordered the wall to be pulled down, despite the warnings of the men of Agra. The work was all but finished when a huge cobra darted out of the ruins, and glided between the captain's legs. Great was the triumph of the workmen; but, as often comes to pass, the magic of the English proved too strong, and the officer escaped unhurt.

Another chieftain of Marwar, who won himself a perpetual name in the days of Raja Jeswunt, Umra's younger brother, was Mokundas of Asope, the head of the Koompawut clan, who was detained against his will at the Emperor's court, because Aurangzib durst not let him out of his sight. On one occasion he replied contemptuously to a message sent by Aurangzib, and the Emperor, in the true spirit of an Eastern despot, ordained that he should be flung unarmed into a tiger's cage.

Emperor and court were assembled to see the sport; the tiger was restlessly pacing up and down behind the bars, its eyes glaring, its tail lashing. Down leapt Mokundas, weaponless and alone. "O tiger of the Muslim!" he cried, "face the tiger of Jeswunt." The tiger's eyes were red

as it turned to face its visitor, but redder still with opium and with anger were the eyes of Mokundas. For a moment man and beast gazed steadfastly at each other, while all the court held their breaths: then the tiger dropped its head, and paced back to the other side of the den. Mokundas turned to the assembly. "You see," he said, "he dares not face me, and no true Rajput may fall upon an enemy who dares not face him."

Aurangzib was overcome with reluctant admiration, commanded Mokundas to come out of the den, and heaped presents upon him. "Have you any sons that inherit your valour?" he asked. "How should we have sons," retorted Mokundas boldly, "when you keep us away from our homes?" From that day Mokundas was known at the Emperor's court by the name of Nahur Khan—"the tiger chief."

His next adventure was in consequence of a dispute with one of the Emperor's sons. There is a peculiarly dangerous feat of Rajput horsemanship, in which the rider gallops at headlong speed beneath the branch of a tree and hangs from it by his arms while the horse goes on. One of the princes of Mewar is said to have killed himself by attempting it, and the rider seldom escapes without a fall. The son of Aurangzib had set his heart upon seeing this feat performed, and commanded Mokundas to do it. Mokundas was direfully affronted at being set to play tricks for the amusement of an idle boy, like a juggler or a tumbler. "Tell the Prince," he said, "that I am

not a monkey; if he wishes to see my feats, it must be where my sword finds play."

The speech was faithfully reported to the Prince, with the result that Mokundas was immediately ordered to march against Soortan, the rebellious Deora prince of Sirohi, and bring him to order.

All the Marwar levy followed Mokundas, but Soortan recked little of them. He was not so foolish as to meet them in the open field; in his stronghold of Achilgurh ("the immovable castle") he could safely defy both the lord of Delhi and the Tiger Chief.

He was sleeping one night amongst the hills of Ajmer, in a little rocky glen, surrounded by his followers. A single sentry stood on guard at the head of the glen, and all were sleeping peacefully, confident that no enemy could find the way among the recesses of the hills. Suddenly the chief felt ill at ease, and strove to rise from the low portable bed on which he was lying. In vain he struggled; some hand had bound him there with his own turban. Dark forms, not those of his Deoras, stood round about him, and a stentorian voice was uplifting itself through the gloom in the war-cry of Marwar.

The sleepers started up, seized their weapons, and looked around them. The sentry lay dead, slain ere he could give the alarm; their prince lay bound and helpless in the midst of a ring of enemies, and over him, dagger in hand, towered the figure of the Tiger Chief.

"The life of your lord is in my hands," cried

Mokundas, as they wavered, uncertain whether to strike; "if ye be wise, not a hair of his head shall be touched; but if ye raise a finger to slay me, he dies on the instant. I gave the alarm that all might behold me taking him to visit my prince."

The Deoras had the wisdom to submit, and Mokundas bore off his prize from the midst of a host, as Pirthi Raj had long ago borne the Raja of Malwa. He took him to Jodhpur, and delivered him up to Raja Jeswunt.

Jeswunt lost no time in going with Mokundas and his captive to the Emperor's court, pledging his word that Soortan should be treated with honour, and return uninjured. The story was told to Aurangzib, who commanded that the chief should be brought into his presence. Soortan was escorted between two officers of the court, who commanded him to prostrate himself as he entered. "Not I," returned the Rajput; "my life is in the Emperor's hands, but my honour is in my own; I never have bowed the head to mortal man, and I never will."

The Raja of Marwar was too important a personage at the court for the officers to dare to use extreme measures to one who was under his protection. Torn asunder by their fear of the Emperor and their fear of Jeswunt, the perplexed officials led Soortan round by another way, and introduced him into the presence through a little door, the lower half of which was fastened. "Now," they thought, "the barbarian must bow his head!"

But, to the surprise of all, Soortan was not to be tricked in this way. Stopping outside the door, he put his feet foremost, and triumphantly entered the hall.

Luckily for all parties, Aurangzib was amused at this obstinacy, and impressed by the chief's bearing. Instead of punishment, he offered him pardon, and a grant of lands. This, as Soortan knew, meant paying homage to Delhi, and he answered at once, "What can your Majesty bestow equal to Achilgurh? All I ask is to be allowed to return to it."

Aurangzib generously granted the request and waived the question of homage. The Tiger Chief's prisoner went back to Achilgurh, where he and his descendants lived as free as air.

Aurangzib is said to have been jealous of Raja Jeswunt, over whose safety Mokundas watched like a faithful dog. Many were the dangers from which he saved his lord; but the bravest of all his deeds, in the opinion of every Rahtore, was his deliverance of the Raja from a ghost.

In the days when Pertap, son of Udai, was Rana of Mewar, Marwar was ruled by another Udai, generally known as "Moota Raja," the Fat Raja, to distinguish him from his namesake. The unworthy son of a brave father, he made alliance with Akbar, and married seven-and-twenty wives, with whom he lived in ease and luxury, since he was so grossly fat that no horse in Marwar would carry him to battle with his Rahtores.

The Fat Raja in his middle-age is said to have

fallen in love with the virgin daughter of a Brahmin, and to have insisted upon carrying her off to his zenana. Her father's entreaties and remonstrances were of no avail; by death alone could she be kept from shame. Her father literally hewed her in pieces, burned her corpse as a sacrifice to the gods, and then leapt into the flames, invoking curses on the Raja. "Let peace be a stranger to him!" he cried. "In three hours, three days, and three years let me have vengeance. From henceforth my dwelling-place shall be the *Dabi Baori*."

The *Dabi Baori* was a large tank or reservoir excavated by one of the Dabi tribe, and from that hour it was said to be haunted by the ghost of the Brahmin. As for the Fat Raja, he peaked and pined, and died at the time named by the injured father.

Now Jeswunt Singh, Udai's great-grandson, had an entanglement with the daughter of one of his civil officers, and forgetful of the legend, made assignation with her at the *Dabi Baori*. They kept tryst; but awful was the punishment of the guilty lovers. Between them, as they were about to embrace, stood the shade of the Brahmin. Jeswunt strove to grapple with it, fell senseless, and ever afterwards believed that the ghost dogged his steps by night and day. He became insane, and every one declared that he was possessed by the dead Brahmin.

Brahmins and wise men were summoned from all parts of Marwar. They burned incense, they

chanted spells, they muttered exorcisms, and at last the evil spirit was made to speak. Yes, it was true that he had entered into Raja Jeswunt, and he would never depart unless some chief, the Raja's peer, would sacrifice himself in his stead.

None was worthy to be accounted Jeswunt's peer save Mokundas, who as hereditary Prime Minister of Marwar had the right to lead the vanguard of the Rahtores in the day of battle and to sit on the Raja's right hand in council—a position similar to that of Saloombra, the head of the Chondawuts, in Mewar. He now came forward, and declared himself ready to take the burden of the haunting upon him, if it would deliver the Raja. The Brahmins drove the spirit into a vessel of water, which they waved thrice round Jeswunt's head, and then gave to Mokundas. The Tiger Chief drained it, and the Raja instantly declared himself freed from the ghost.

"The faithful of the faithful" henceforth was the Tiger Chief's title in Rajast'han, and he earned it hardly. On his deathbed he called his son, and made him swear that neither he nor any of his descendants would ever again sit on the Raja's right hand as Prime Minister of Marwar. The office, he said, was bought too dear if such sacrifices were to be required of the holder. The son obeyed, and the dignity of Prime Minister was transferred to the head of the other great house of Marwar, the Champawuts of Ahwa.

THE STORY OF JESWUNT SINGH OF MARWAR

IN the last struggle with Delhi, known as the "Thirty Years' War," Marwar was the first of the Rajput states to be involved. It will make the story clearer if, at this point, we turn from Mewar to its old enemy and ally, the sister state of Marwar, now generally known as Jodhpur, which is the name of its capital.

The word Marwar is a corruption of *Maroo-war*, meaning "the region of death," and was given originally to all the desert regions to the west of Mewar. Bikanir, Jodhpur, Jessulmer, are all part of "that extensive plain of ever-drifting sand." But Marwar came by degrees to mean only that district inhabited by the Rahtore tribe of Rajputs, through which the great salt river, the Looni, flows, from its source at Ajmer, to the dreary fens and quicksands, one hundred and fifty miles in length, which form what is known as the "Rin" or "Run."

At the end of the thirteenth century, after Mohammad Ghori had defeated and slain the last Chohan king of Delhi, Pirthi Raj, one of his next conquests was the great city of Kanauj, where the

Rahtores held sway. Jeichund, the raja, was defeated, and drowned when attempting to make his escape. A few years later, the sole survivors, his two grandsons, with two hundred retainers, left their native land on the banks of the Ganges, and wandered out into the world. Fate led them to the Looni river, and here, in a barren and desolate land, they set up the banner of their race among the sandhills. For the next hundred and fifty years their history is like that of all other sovereign Rajput tribes in the early stages; by marriage, by foray, by stratagems that to the Western mind seem cold-blooded treachery, they gradually acquired land from their neighbours, and made themselves feared if not respected.

How Rahtores for a short time bore rule in Mewar has been told in the story of Prince Chonda. Joda, the prince who was expelled from Udaipur by Chonda and his men, on regaining possession of Marwar, founded the city of Jodhpur in 1459, and it became his capital instead of the older city, Mundore.

After this there is little to be said of the Rajas of Marwar for several generations. Maldeo, who refused hospitality to the Emperor Humayun in his need, is the only one who appears at all conspicuously in history or tradition. Soor Singh, his grandson, was a favourite with Akbar, who frequently employed him in expeditions against the foes of Delhi. High in esteem at the imperial court was also the son of Soor Singh, Raja Guj, who, as we have seen, came to the help of Jehangir

at a very critical moment. But one of the greatest of the "kings of the desert" was Guj's son and successor, Raja Jeswunt Singh, to whose lot it fell to govern Marwar in troublous times.

In the latter years of the reign of the Emperor Shah Jehan, a rebellion broke out amongst his graceless sons, who could not wait for their father's death before seizing upon their inheritance. Each of them had governed a section of the empire as his father's lieutenant, and employed the revenues in raising and equipping armies to be used against his brothers.

In 1658 the report that Shah Jehan was dying brought matters to a crisis. Shah Shuja, the prince who ruled Bengal, declared that his father had been poisoned by Prince Dara, who alone had remained near the Emperor's person, and proclaimed himself Emperor, struck coins in his own name, and set out for Agra at the head of an army. Prince Murad, the youngest, also set his name on the coinage of his province, and having assaulted Surat, and extorted six lakhs of rupees from its merchants, marched from Gujarat at the head of another army. Aurangzib, the remaining brother, who feigned indifference to the world, and had spent some years as a faquir, for the present made no sign.

In this crisis Dara and the sick Emperor turned to the Rajputs, who could be trusted to be faithful. Raja Jey Singh of Amber was sent against Shah Shuja, and fulfilled his mission, surprising the army, and sending the Prince in headlong flight with the

loss of treasure, artillery, and ammunition. Jeswunt Singh was appointed to command the forces sent against Aurangzib, who had suddenly announced his intention of joining himself to his dear brother, Prince Murad.

A proud man was the Raja of Marwar as he marched at the head of the troops of Rajast'han and the imperial guards along the banks of the Nerbudda, and his pride was his ruin. He might have fallen upon Aurangzib and defeated him before he could join Murad, in which case the imperial troops, flushed with victory, should have had little difficulty in crushing the younger prince. But with true Rajput haughtiness and impracticability he held off his men and let the brothers unite their armies, desiring, he said, "to conquer two princes at once."

"Under a withering storm of arrows and javelins," the princes' army forded the Nerbudda and crashed into the imperial troops. The Moghul guards, with whom Aurangzib is said to have been tampering, fled without attempting to make any stand, leaving Jeswunt and his thirty thousand Rajputs to meet the whole strength of the united armies.

The Raja was nothing loth; to fight against hopeless odds was the crowning joy of a Rajput's life, and he and his men were ready to face legions of the "Toork." "Jeswunt, spear in hand, mounted his steed Maboob, and charged the imperial brothers; ten thousand Muslims fell in the onset, which cost seventeen hundred

Rahtores, besides Gehlotes, Haras, Gores, and some of every clan of Rajwarra. Aurangzib and Murad only escaped because their days were not yet numbered. Maboob and his rider were covered with blood ; Jeswunt looked like a famished lion, and like one he relinquished his prey."

It was ever a common error of the Rajputs to think that mere valour could take the place of science and of artillery. Out of eight thousand Rahtores, six hundred left the battlefield. Weary, heart-sick, many of them sorely wounded, they struggled back to their home in the desert, only to find the gates of the Raja's castle shut and barred in their faces.

The chief Rani of Marwar was a daughter of Mewar, and the spirit of Sanga or of Pertap, her ancestors, was strong within her. When she heard that her husband was coming home, defeated, with a handful of his men, she was not to be comforted It was useless to represent to her that the defeat was honourable, that Jeswunt had borne himself gallantly, and had only left the field when the day was hopelessly lost ; he had no business to return at all, if he could not return in triumph. "She commanded in a dry mood to shut the gates of the castle, and not to let this infamous man enter ; [she declared] that he was not her husband, that the son-in-law of the great Rana could not have so mean a soul ; that he was to remember that, being grafted into so illustrious a house, he was to imitate its virtue ; in a word, he was to vanquish or to die. A moment after, she was of

another humour; she commands a pile of wood to be laid, that she might burn herself; [she said] that they abused her; that her husband must needs be dead; that it could not be otherwise. And a little while after she was seen to change countenance, to fall into a passion, and break into a thousand reproaches against him."

Even when, after much trouble, poor Raja Jeswunt succeeded in gaining admittance to his own castle, his wife obstinately refused to see him. For more than a week she shut herself up in her rooms, "till at last her mother coming, brought her in time to herself, by assuring her that as soon as the Raja had but refreshed himself, he would raise another army to fight Aurangzib and repair his honour." Where the women were of this temper, it is not strange that their husbands and sons were able to defy all odds.

The Rani was justified in her anger against her husband by all Jeswunt's after life. Aurangzib and Murad, having defeated Dara and deposed Shah Jehan, turned their attention to Shuja, and sent messages to the Raja of Marwar, inviting him to accept their forgiveness for the past and join their army.

Jeswunt obeyed, and appeared in the camp of Aurangzib with his Rahtores, having privately sent a message to Shuja, promising to fall upon the rear of Aurangzib's army at a particular time, if Shuja would attack in front. He kept his word. The baggage train was thrown into disorder, and while the army was stumbling over itself in con-

fusion and bewilderment, Jeswunt calmly plundered the camp, loaded his camels with the spoil, and devoutly hoping that Aurangzib and Shuja would destroy each other, set off for Agra, leaving the brothers to fight it out. Finding Dara too supine to join with him and set the old Emperor free by a sudden stroke, he and his Rahtores rode on to Jodhpur, where he decked his castle with the goods and chattels borne from the camp of Aurangzib.

In the meanwhile Aurangzib's inflexible calmness had enabled him to turn what might have been a crushing defeat into a victory. Prince Shuja was again driven in headlong flight, and showing no resentment for past events, Aurangzib again opened negotiations with Jeswunt, offering him the vice-royalty of Gujarat if he would leave Dara's cause.

The offer was accepted, and Jeswunt Singh promised to lead the Rajput contingent in the expedition against Sivaji, the Mahratta chief, who had risen to trouble Delhi. As soon as he reached the Deccan, the incorrigible Raja sent messengers to Sivaji, proposing that they should unite to murder Shayista Khan, the imperial commander-in-chief, after which Jeswunt would command the army and be able to do as he pleased.

The plot was betrayed to Aurangzib, who again dissembled his feelings, and treated Jeswunt with friendliness; but he seized an opportunity of replacing the Raja in his command by Jey Singh of Amber, who almost alone of the Rajput princes

had not played fast and loose with his allegiance. From that time onward Jeswunt's life was a most unedifying record of treasons and stratagems. He was continually plotting and scheming with the Emperor's kinsmen and foes, continually betrayed to the Emperor, and continually spared because Aurangzib durst not come to extremities against so powerful a vassal. Mewar and the other Rajput states were in tolerable quietness, but let an imperial army enter Marwar, and all would rise buzzing around the Emperor's ears like a nest of hornets. Moreover, "the region of death" was no place for an invading army, as Jeswunt well knew when, time after time, after the miscarriage of one of his intrigues, he took horse thither, and was "over the border and away" before punishment could overtake him.

The Rahtore bards have striven to make a heroic figure out of Jeswunt. With all allowance for the Oriental point of view, he seems an indifferent hero, who could neither be faithful to the empire for his oath's sake, nor steadfastly resist it for the sake of Rajast'han. Had he and the other Rajput princes leagued together at the time of Shah Jehan's deposition, when the Moghul brothers were flying at each other's throats, the independence of the Rajput states might have been secured—for a time, at least. But Raj Singh of Mewar was faithful to the Emperor's salt, and Jeswunt Singh of Marwar and Jey Singh of Amber each thought only of himself, and fought for his own hand.

That Jeswunt had at least one virtue of a patriot in making his suzerain's life a burden to him, cannot be denied. "Sighs never ceased flowing from the heart of Aurangzib while Jeswunt lived." Over and over again, we are told, the Emperor tried to entrap him in various ways, but the Raja was too wary to trust himself within reach of his overlord. At last, says a Rahtore bard, "Aurangzib finding treachery in vain, put the collar of simulated friendship around Jeswunt's neck, and sent him beyond the Attok to die."

A Western reader will probably conclude that anything which might be practised against Jeswunt in the way of opposing guile by guile, was no more than he deserved. The facts were that a rebellion had broken out among the Afghans of Kabul—a wild, turbulent race, who were one of the many thorns in the side of the Emperor, and Aurangzib thought it an excellent chance of suppressing them by means of another equally troublesome race, the Rahtores of Marwar. Raja Jeswunt was appointed commander of the force that was sent against them, and as he marched northwards after receiving his orders, the Emperor doubtless felt himself "fairly rid of two nuisances."

Marwar was left under the regency of Jeswunt's eldest son, Pirthi Singh, who had not been long in charge of his father's kingdom when a message from Aurangzib commanded his attendance at court. Pirthi Singh obeyed and appeared on the appointed day in the Hall of Audience, and was

received with great favour and courtesy. One day, as he stood before the throne in the attitude prescribed by etiquette—feet close together, head bowed, and hands joined in front of the breast, and pointing upwards at an angle of forty-five degrees—the Emperor beckoned to him to come nearer. "Well, Rahtore," he said, laying his hand upon Pirthi Singh's joined hands, "it is told me your arm is as strong as that of your father; what can you do now?"

"God preserve your Majesty!" answered Pirthi Singh. "When the sovereign of mankind lays the hand of protection on the meanest of his subjects, all that subject's hopes are realised, but when he condescends to take both of mine, I feel as if I could conquer the world."

The Emperor looked down at the animated face and the strong sinewy figure. "Here is another *Khootun!*" he exclaimed; and those present, who knew that *Khootun* was Aurangzib's name for Jeswunt, and knew how the Emperor feared and hated the Raja, guessed that evil was in store for Jeswunt's son.

Nevertheless Aurangzib feigned to be pleased at the youth's boldness, and sent for a robe of honour, which Pirthi Singh was ordered to put on there and then, as was the custom. Then the audience was dismissed, and the Marwar prince hurried to his quarters, light of heart and believing that his fortune was made.

Ere the day was over, Pirthi Singh was a disfigured corpse. A few hours after leaving the Hall

of Audience, he was seized with a mysterious illness, and died in agonies of pain.

A sudden attack of cholera, or even of fever, would account for such a death, in the climate of Delhi or Agra ; but every Rahtore believed that it was caused by the robe of honour, which of course must have been poisoned.

When the news came to Kabul where Jeswunt was warring against the Afghans, the Raja was convinced that the son had been murdered by Aurangzib as an act of vengeance for the father's treasons. Pirthi Singh was his heir, his pride, and the hardened, arrogant man was crushed by the blow. Never again did he hold up his head. His two remaining sons, who were with him in Kabul, died shortly afterwards from the effects of the northern climate ; and Jeswunt was left alone, a childless man, to comfort himself as best he might with quenching revolts against the slayer of his son, and with the society of two of his queens, who had followed him to Kabul.

One of these was the Mewar princess who had shut his castle gates in his face when he returned from a defeat. She was not likely to be a consoler in a grief of this nature, and if the other Rani were more sympathetic, her efforts were of no avail. After a reign of two-and-forty years Jeswunt Singh died of a broken heart, far away from his own home, without a son to "take up his father's feud." His two queens and his faithful Rahtores were left to face what might come,

with many leagues of hostile country between them and the deserts that had so often sheltered the Rahtores from the wrath of Aurangzib. At the most inconvenient moment possible Jeswunt Singh had "found freedom," leaving as his last bequest to Marwar and Rajast'han a thirty years' war.[1]

[1] For the story of Jeswunt and the ghost of the Brahmin, see "Some Chieftains of Marwar."

THE STORY OF THE THIRTY YEARS' WAR

WHEN Jeswunt Singh of Marwar died at Kabul, his chief Rani, the Mewar princess, declared that she would burn herself with his corpse. She was stayed by one of the great chieftains of Marwar, the head of the Koompawut clan; the other Ranis, and the wives of inferior degree, might follow their lord to heaven if they pleased, but it was her duty to wait and see whether the child she bore beneath her heart would be a son to avenge his father.

So while the other wives gave themselves to the flames—a lonely Rani, left behind in Mundore, took Jeswunt's turban with her to the pyre, since she might not lie by his corpse—the Mewar princess tarried for two long months in a foreign land, girt about with foes. So lion-hearted a woman could not fail to bring forth male children only, and the expected child was a son, to whom she gave the name of Ajit.

The dread of all the Rahtores was that Aurangzib would get the little Raja, the last hope of Marwar, into his power. As soon as the Rani was able to bear the journey, she and her child

were placed in a litter, and without waiting for passport, or leave to travel from the Emperor, the whole party set off on the homeward journey. The bravest and wisest of the Rahtores was Doorga, or Doorga-das, of Gangani, the head of the Kurnote clan, and it was to him that the Rani trusted for the protection of her son, both on the way to Jodhpur and afterwards.

The first obstacle was at the crossing of the Indus. The imperial guards, who were stationed at Attock, refused to allow the Rani to pass without the Emperor's leave; her Rahtores attempted to force their way through the guards, but without success, and drew off in sullen anger. Next day, news came to the triumphant guards that the whole party had contrived to find a ford, the existence of which had been forgotten, and had crossed to the other side.

This was thought a sufficiently grave matter for the Emperor to hear of it, and an express was sent to Aurangzib. So, when the Rani and her escort drew near to Delhi, they were intercepted by a force too large for them to resist, and forbidden to go further. The Rani demanded to be allowed to enter the city, where she might have found other Rajputs to help her, besides her own Rahtores. It was refused, and the fugitives were bidden to camp at a place outside the walls, where they were surrounded by the troops of Aurangzib.

The Emperor knew too well how Rajputs could fight to come to extremities until he had

tried stratagem. His next move was to send to Doorga and the Rahtore chieftains, commanding them to his presence. He received them in the Hall of Audience, and offered them a great bribe—no less than the state of Marwar itself, to be divided amongst them, if they would give their baby Raja into his hands.

With one voice the chieftains declared that they would not abandon the son of Jeswunt. "Our country is with our sinews, and we can defend both it and our lord." "With eyes red with rage they left the hall. Their abode was surrounded by the hosts of the Emperor."

The Rani was disguised in mean attire, and placed in a common palanquin. Raja Ajit was hidden at the bottom of a basket of sweetmeats. One of the Rani's slaves was dressed in her clothes, and a handmaid's child was swathed in the little Raja's vestments. Then Doorga sent away the women and children of inferior rank belonging to the party, and with them the disguised Rani, under the escort of a few Rahtores. The basket of sweets, with its precious burden, was given to a kindly Muslim, who in this hour of danger came forward to help them.

Aurangzib began to be suspicious, and demanded that the Rani and her child should be given up to him at once. The Rahtores, knowing that every moment was a gain, returned answer that they would shed the last drop of their blood rather than surrender their prince and his mother. Feeling reassured by this that his prize had not

escaped him, as he had begun to fear, Aurangzib would brook no more refusals; he ordered his troops to storm the encampment, and secure mother and child at the point of the sword.

The Rahtores' hearts were rejoiced as they prepared for the last struggle. "They made oblations to the gods, took a double portion of opium, and mounted their steeds." "Let us swim," they exclaimed, "in the ocean of fight."

As the troops of Delhi gathered round the encampment, Jeswunt's daughters and the surviving women of his family were "sent to inhabit heaven," to use the words of the chronicler. Then, lance in hand, the Rahtores rushed upon the foe. "Then the music of swords and shields began. Wave followed wave in the field of blood. Every tribe and every clan performed its duty in this day's pilgrimage to the stream of the sword, in which Doorga-das ground the foe and saved his honour."

At last only Doorga and a few men were left, and they, forming in a close body, hewed a way through the soldiers of the Emperor, and escaped from the encampment, leaving the false Rani and Raja to be captured and taken to the Emperor. For Ajit's sake some tried warriors must live to fight on other fields, and enough had been done for honour. "The battle fought by the children of Doohur,[1] in the streets of Delhi," was long remembered in Marwar.

Doorga and his followers succeeded in over-

[1] Doohur was one of the earliest Rahtore kings of Marwar.

taking the Muslim with the basket of sweets, and together they bore the Prince beyond the reach of his father's foes. Even in Jodhpur he could not be safe; Aurangzib's arm was long, and it could reach to the desert. On the heights of Mount Abu, where the marble cupolas of the Jain shrines "rise like wreaths of sea-foam in the dawn," there was a monastery in which dwelt certain holy recluses. Hither Doorga carried the child, and there Raja Ajit grew up to boyhood, knowing nothing of the high estate to which he was born.

In the meanwhile the false Rani and child had been taken before Aurangzib, who discovered how he had been cheated. His keen wit soon found a way of turning the situation to his own advantage. He treated his captives with the greatest respect, as if they had really been the persons whom they represented, announced to all that the Raja and the Queen-Mother of Marwar were living under his protection, and when he went to fight against Marwar, took the pretender with him and proclaimed him as the true son of Jeswunt Singh. Not content with this, Aurangzib incited one of Jeswunt's nephews to claim the throne, and all Marwar was in a blaze from end to end.

The Rahtores held firm. They knew—for Doorga-das had pledged himself for the truth of the story—that Jeswunt's rightful heir was in safe keeping, waiting for the day when he should be old enough to take his place as their leader, although few besides Doorga-das knew where the boy was hidden. None of the rival claimants

could win or threaten them from their allegiance to a child whose very existence was a matter of hearsay. Even when Aurangzib descended upon Marwar with his armies, taking Jodhpur and all the principal towns, throwing down temples, desecrating shrines, and erecting mosques in every place, Doorga-das and his men had no thought of submission.

The brave Rani, Ajit's mother, fought as valiantly for her son, in her own way, as any mail-clad warrior amongst them. Now that the land was overrun by the troops of Aurangzib, Mount Abu was too near to Ajmer to be a safe hiding-place for the boy. In her distress she turned to her own house, and called upon Rana Raj Singh of Mewar to protect his own flesh and blood.

The Rana answered to the call; in warfare with the empire, Mewar was sure to fare worse than Marwar, since its fields and valleys were easily accessible to an enemy, while in Marwar it was hard to manœuvre an army, and harder still to feed it. But a daughter of Mewar was entitled to protection, although there might be nothing to offer her but the tangled woods and precipices of the Aravalis, where Sanga and Pertap had hidden from their foes. The Rani would take nothing for herself; she would stay in Marwar, and be the spirit and the life of her son's cause. It was Doorga-das who took the little Raja to Mewar and brought him up under his own eye at Kailwa, which the Rana appointed as their residence.

As if this were not enough to bring down the wrath of Aurangzib upon Mewar, a fresh cause of offence was added. There was a junior branch of the royal house of Marwar at Roopnagurh, and its head had a fair daughter. Aurangzib sent to demand the princess in marriage, and backed the proposal with two thousand horse, who were to escort the bride to him. The Prince of Roopnagurh had no power of resisting such an argument, and resigned himself to see his daughter go. But the princess' heart burned within her at the thought of being given to the foe of her race. Rather than go to Delhi she would die, and if there was no help to be had from her father she would seek it elsewhere.

She turned to her old tutor, the family priest, who was ready to do her bidding. He left Roopnagurh, and journeyed at the top of his speed, through a distracted country, until he reached Udaipur, and entered the presence of the Rana, into whose hands he gave a letter from the princess.

"Is the swan to be the mate to the stork?" she had written. "Is a Rajput woman, pure in blood, to be wife to the monkey-faced barbarian? Rather will I slay myself than bear this dishonour."

The imperial guards were waiting at Roopnagurh for the hour when the princess and her attendants should be borne in the gilded palanquins to Delhi. Down into their midst, on a sudden, clashed a band of Rajputs, the Rana himself and a body of picked men from Mewar.

The princess was borne off by her prince, as in the old fairy tales, and great was the joy of all Mewar when the Rana came home to Udaipur with the bride he had won.

The vassals of Aurangzib had defied and mocked at him ; so be it—they should rue their presumption. The Emperor proclaimed the ancient law of Mohammad, which imposed a tax upon every soul who did not conform to Islam—that hated poll-tax which Akbar had abolished more than a hundred years ago—and let loose his armies upon Rajast'han.

Aurangzib himself, in person, directed the operations from Ajmer, and summoned three of his sons, Mu'azzam, A'zam, and Akbar, to command the divisions of the army. The Rana and most of his people had retreated to the gorges of the Aravalis, as in the days of Sanga and Pertap ; the Moghuls were ordered to cut off all supplies from them, to ravage the country, burn the villages, cut down the fruit-trees, and carry of the women and children.

The Rajputs were prepared for the worst, and insignificant as were their numbers compared with the hosts of Delhi, the Emperor's last edict had kindled the flame in the souls of all Hindus, and made, out of every common soldier who rode forth to battle with the Toork, a religious enthusiast. Even the wild races of the woods and mountains flocked to the Rana's banner.

"As the cloud pours water upon the earth, so did Aurangzib pour his barbarians over the land,"

says the chronicler of Marwar. "He remained but five days at Ajmer, and marched against Chitor. It fell; it appeared as if the heavens had fallen. Ajit was protected by the Rana, and the Rahtores led the van in the host of the Sesodias. Seeing the strength of the Moghuls, they shut up the young prince, like a flame confined in a vessel."

While Aurangzib was taking Chitor, Doorga-das created a diversion by attacking Jhalore. In the open field, the Rajputs were not strong enough to stand against the Moghuls, but they harassed their foes continually by surprises, by intercepting convoys, by darting from one end of the country to the other. The wretched state of the land, mulcted by two hostile forces at once, is beyond the power of words to describe. "The country became a waste; fear stalked triumphant." But Aurangzib, like Akbar, found that the Rajputs might be starved, but could not be made to yield. "The Aravali gave shelter to the Rahtores. From its fastnesses they issued, and mowed down entire harvests of the Muslims, piling them in heaps like the sheaves of corn. Aurangzib had no repose."

The Emperor, having avoided an ambush carefully laid for him by the Rana, sent on Prince Akbar with fifty thousand men to Udaipur. "Not a soul interrupted Akbar's progress to the city. Palaces, gardens, lakes, and isles met his eye, but no living thing; all was silence." Thinking that the inhabitants had fled to escape the violence of his soldiers, the Prince camped beside the lake,

and relieved to have escaped from the stern eye of his father, gave himself up to enjoying all that gardens and palaces could afford.

One of the Rana's wisest counsellors was the head of the Suktawuts. "Let the Emperor have free entrance to the passes," he advised; "shut him in and make famine his foe." Acting on the first part of this advice, the Rana had allowed Prince Akbar to advance unopposed, but the Moghul army was closely watched all the while by invisible foes. Like a thunderbolt from the sky, Jey Singh, the heir of Mewar, fell upon Akbar's unsuspecting force as it lay by the shores of the lake. "Some were praying, some feasting, some at chess; they came to steal and yet fell asleep," says the chronicler, grimly. It was a sleep from which many never awakened; Jey Singh's men had no mercy for their foes.

Akbar tried to escape with the remnant to the place where he had left the Emperor; the way was blocked by the Rana's men. He turned, and tried to retreat through the mountain passes into Marwar; the hillmen and the Bhils choked up the end of the valley, and hurled rocks and stones upon the heads of the Moghuls. When Akbar turned again, he found Jey Singh awaiting him at the entrance through which he had passed.

Famine and the sword would soon have done their work upon Akbar's men, but the fatal generosity of the Rajput intervened. Jey Singh believed in Akbar's vows to bring the war to an end, and

let him retreat to Chitor, without even requiring the Moghuls to give up their arms.

There is a story that at this time, during Aurangzib's mountain marches, Udaipur, a beautiful Circassian, his favourite wife, fell into the hands of the Rana. He received her with the greatest respect, showed her all kindness and courtesy, and as soon as the Emperor was in a place of safety, sent her back under an escort, with an entreaty that Aurangzib would forbear to slaughter any of the sacred animals that might have been left on the plains—a request of which the Emperor took no notice.

This irregular fighting among the hills was the warfare in which the Rajputs had had most experience, and despite the Emperor's superiority in men and in ordnance, they scored success after success. Once the Emperor's standard and elephants were captured by the Rana. At another time Prince Akbar was utterly defeated by the united forces of Mewar and Marwar, owing, it is said, to the resourcefulness of a Rajput chieftain, who having made prize of five hundred camels belonging to the imperial army, fastened lighted torches to them, and drove them back to Akbar's camp.

Then Doorga-das conceived a great idea—to make use of the son against the father. Why should not one of the three Moghul princes now fighting against the Rajputs be incited to deal with Aurangzib as Aurangzib and his brothers had dealt with Shah Jehan? Prince Akbar's heart had been touched by the bravery of the Rajputs, and by

their generosity to him when he was at their mercy. He was weary of this incessant fighting, and had little love for his father. Messengers went to and fro between the camps, and in a short time news was brought to Aurangzib that Akbar had proclaimed himself Emperor of India, and was marching against him with seventy thousand men.

Even in this crisis the Emperor was master of himself and of the situation. His other sons were far distant; the force left with him at Ajmer barely amounted to one thousand men, and only diplomacy could save him. Cool and clear-headed as ever, he wove his intrigues, sent out his spies, feinted, parried, and won the game. By means of a letter dropped by one of his emissaries in the tent of Doorga-das, the Rajputs were made to believe that Akbar intended to betray them to his father; division and discord arose in Akbar's camp, several of the Moghul generals deserted him for their old master, the Rajputs dispersed in all directions, and Akbar was left with only Doorga-das and three thousand horse to protect him.

Next day the Rajputs learned too late that Akbar had planned no treachery against them, and was, like themselves, the victim of his father's diplomacy. But the opportunity was gone. Mu'azzam and A'zam had joined their father, and nothing remained for Akbar but fight. The Rajputs would have given him sanctuary in their hills, but he chose rather to escape beyond the reach of his father's arm. Under escort of Doorga-das and five hundred men, he hurried across country to

the Mahrattas, while others of the Rajputs led the Emperor on a false scent in the opposite direction.

Great was the wrath of Aurangzib when he found that his son had escaped. "Rage so far got the better of his religion," quaintly says the annalist of Marwar, "that he threw the Koran at the head of the Almighty." The result was to make Aurangzib turn all his attentions to Marwar. To the horrors of war were now added the horrors of pestilence, and a fearful epidemic of cholera struck down those whom the sword had spared; but still the Rahtores would not yield.

Amid all this distress and suffering, the son of Jeswunt Singh was growing from infancy to boyhood, and the Rahtores became impatient to see their prince, of whose whereabouts few of them had any idea. "Without the sight of our lord, bread and water have no flavour." Ajit was brought from his hiding-place, and presented to his vassals; the *teeka* was made on his brow, and he received the customary offerings of gold, pearls, and horses. The struggle continued with renewed spirit, and the young Raja soon showed himself worthy of his race.

Meanwhile, in the fiercest of the struggle with the empire, Raj Singh of Mewar had died, and was succeeded by his son, Jey Singh, who had spared Prince Akbar. Jey Singh, "the lion of victory," was a brave and noble prince, and his generosity to his enemy brought some good to Mewar and to himself in the end. An honourable peace was arranged between him and the Emperor,

who, hard pressed by revolts in the Deccan, had little time to spare for Rajast'han, and Mewar enjoyed a little rest. Of course the treaty was soon broken; it was impossible for the first of the Rajput states to hold aloof when nearly all the others were seething in perpetual revolt. Either side blamed the faithlessness of the other; Mewar exclaimed against the perfidy of Delhi, and Delhi complained that the Rana "had ridden his elephants through the treaty."

In length of years, if in no other way, Aurangzib beat most of his opponents. Jey Singh had died, and his son, Umra II., had been on the throne for seven years, when at last "the joyful tidings of the death of the Emperor" came to Rajast'han in March 1707.

Ajit immediately took horse and rode to Jodhpur, whence the Muslim fled in terror. "Ajit ascended to the halls of his ancestors. The barbarians, in turn, were made captive; they fought, were slaughtered and dispersed. The triumph of the Hindu was complete when, to escape from perdition, their flying foes invoked Seeta-Ram [1] and Hur Govind,[1] begging their bread in the day, and taking to their heels at night. The chaplet of the Mullah served to count the name of Rama,[1] and a handful of gold was given that their beards might be removed"—for the Rajputs wore no beards, in order to be as unlike the Muslims as possible.

Bahadur Shah, the son of Aurangzib, had not his father's ability, and had such difficulties to

[1] The name of a Hindu deity.

face as no former Moghul Emperor had known. Sikhs, Mahrattas, Rajputs, all in turn had been goaded to madness by his father's bigotry, and were tearing the empire to pieces. The luxurious, effeminate, petticoated courtiers who went to war in palanquins had nothing of the vigour and spirit of their forefathers, who had ridden down from the north with Babar. Under the circumstances, Bahadur was thankful to give back to the Rajput states the privileges and exemptions which they had enjoyed under Akbar, thus making them practically independent, and have his hands free from one of the many coils that were entangled about him.

The rulers of the three chief states of Rajast'han —Umra of Mewar, Ajit of Marwar, and Jey Singh of Amber—met together, and vowed a solemn alliance. From henceforth they had no part or lot with Delhi. To bind the alliance more closely, each of the other princes took a wife from Mewar, and swore that her child should succeed to his throne in preference to all other heirs.

Thus ended the great Thirty Years' War, in sealing the doom of Moghul and Rajput. Had Aurangzib allied himself with the chieftains of Rajast'han, he and his sons might have counted on their aid in contending with the Mahrattas, who were fated to be the ruin of the empire. But, as has been said truly, "Aurangzib" (and each of his successors) "had to fight his southern foes with the loss of his right arm." On the other hand, the Rajput's determination to cut themselves loose

was fatal to themselves as well as to Delhi; it enabled the Mahrattas to drag down both. The marriage treaty was especially unfortunate, since it opened the way for perpetual quarrels over the succession, and gave the Mahrattas a pretext for interference.

Ajit, whose birth had been the signal for such disasters to Mewar and to Rajast'han, reigned long and on the whole well, but his name was disgraced by one shameful deed. Most honoured, best beloved of all Rajputs was the veteran Doorga-das, whose picture on his white horse was everywhere to be seen. Men told with pride how Aurangzib, in the bitterness of his soul, had bidden a painter to draw him the likeness of his two deadliest foes—Sivaji the Mahratta and Doorga-das the Rahtore—how the painter had drawn Sivaji seated on a couch, and Doorga on horseback, toasting barley cakes for his daily meal over a fire of maize stalks on the point of his lance—and how the old Emperor had gazed on both and cried, "I may entrap that fellow Sivaji, but that dog Doorga is born to be my bane."

It was to Doorga's care that Ajit owed everything—his training in arms, his kingdom, even life itself, and ill was the care repaid. From jealousy, or some unexplained cause, Ajit took a displeasure against the old hero, stripped him of all his property, and banished him from Marwar. The Rana of Mewar gave him a home by the lake of Udaipur, and allowed five hundred rupees daily for his support. A Moghul newsletter states that

Bahadur Shah once summoned the Rana to surrender Doorga-das to him; the Rana stoutly refused.

It must have seemed like the stroke of justice when in 1730 Ajit was murdered at dead of night as he slept in the arms of his favourite wife, a Boondi princess, by two of their sons. Only the younger actually committed the crime, but it was done at the direct instigation of the elder, Abhye Singh, who succeeded to the throne. From that hour Marwar ceased to prosper.

NOTE

This chapter has been put together with great difficulty, and in complete uncertainty as to dates. Tod contradicts, not only other authorities, but himself, in this matter, and as I was bound to tell the story as he told it, I was obliged to give up all idea of reconciling the chronology. The main facts are to be found in Elphinstone, Lane-Poole, and others, very much as Tod relates them, if due allowance is made for the Rajput point of view.

The episode of Ajit's escape from Aurangzib is told here from two sources. Tod gives an animated description of the fight of "the children of Doohur" taken from the annals of Marwar, but he says nothing of the difficulty in crossing the Indus, or of the spurious Rana and child of whom Aurangzib contrived to make such good use.

THE STORY OF RANA SANGRAM

SANGRAM, who came to the throne in 1716, was the last Rana of Mewar in the eighteenth century who showed any of the old heroic qualities.

Many stories are told of his inflexible justice, his determination, and his simplicity of life, and he was long remembered as the last ruler under whom Mewar dwelt in peace, untroubled by the Mahratta hordes.

He was very young at the death of his father, Umra II., and for some years Mewar was governed in his name by his mother. When he was old enough to take the power into his own hands, the Rani could not be persuaded that she had no more concern with affairs of state, and one of his first tasks was to teach her to mind her own business. Having always found him the most dutiful as well as the most courteous of sons, she did not realise that he would not brook her interference when once the years of his minority had passed.

A chieftain of the blood royal, the lord of Deriavud had fallen into disgrace, and his estate had been confiscated by Sangram's orders. In

spite of his youth, the Rana had already established a reputation for justice, and as his chiefs knew that he neither punished nor pardoned on the impulse of the moment, not one of them took upon himself to intercede for Deriavud.

After two years' banishment from court, the culprit began to grow weary, and made up his mind to obtain a pardon, by one means or another. He had friends among the ladies-in-waiting who attended upon the Rana's mother, and he implored them to lay his petition, and a note for two lakhs of rupees,[1] before the Rani, not forgetting to add valuable presents for themselves.

Every day, before sitting down to dinner, it was the Rana's wont to visit his mother in her apartments. One morning, after each had greeted the other, the Rani announced that she had a favour to ask of her son. The Deriavud chief had been punished for his offences, and was truly contrite ; would not the Rana give back his estates and admit him once more to his presence ? She made no secret of the note that she had received from the chief as an inducement to plead his cause. The Rana showed no sign of annoyance, or even of hesitation, in assuring her that her request was granted. It was customary in Mewar that eight days should be allowed to pass between the first announcement of a royal decree and its execution, but the Rana now ordered that the deed restoring the estate should be made out on

[1] £25,000.

the instant, and brought to him before he left the Rani's apartments. When it came, he placed it in her hands, besought her earnestly but respectfully to send back the note to the chief, bowed low before her, and went to his dinner.

The Rani plumed herself upon her diplomacy until the same hour on the following day, when her son did not appear. She sent to ask what he was doing, and was told that he had ordered dinner an hour earlier. The evening came, and still no Rana. The next day came, and the next, and so for many days, and still no Rana. She sent him a loving message ; she received a formal and dutiful reply, but he would not come to visit her.

Then the Rani began to realise her folly, and was in bitter grief. She humbled herself to ask the intercession of Sangram's wise and faithful minister, who helped to govern Mewar through three reigns, respected by all his contemporaries ; the minister replied that he could not wait upon her, as he was forbidden to speak of affairs of state to any one but the Rana. She tried every other means that came into her head, without success. She sulked, made the lives of her attendants a burden to them, would see no one, and refused to eat; the Rana took no notice. She declared that she would go on pilgrimage to the Ganges ; the Rana was prompt in ordering an escort, and in making every preparation for her comfort on the journey. When the time came for her to start, and the palanquin was waiting

in the court, she made sure that her son would be there at least to bid her farewell; but only ceremonious messages were brought to her by his officers. Despairing and crushed with shame, the unhappy mother stepped into her palanquin, and let herself be borne from Udaipur, sick with a sickness of the heart which even the water of the Ganges could scarce be hoped to cure.

On her way she passed by Amber, and its great Raja, Siwai Jey Singh,[1] came out to pay his respects to her. There was a close connection between the houses of Mewar and Amber, Rana and Raja each having married the other's sister, and Jey Singh overwhelmed the Rani with attentions, insisting upon her turning out of her way to see his newly-built city of Jeypore, and even putting his shoulder under the pole of her litter, the better to show her honour. This courtesy went to her heart; by all accounts, Raja Jey Singh was not an ideal confidant, but the Rani was lonely, and had none else to whom she could pour out her troubles. The Raja was properly sympathetic, and promised to do his best as mediator with the Rana.

Wearily the Rani went to her journey's end, made the round of the shrines and holy places, and then turned back. On the way home she again passed by Amber, and the Raja came out with a bodyguard to escort her to Udaipur, that he might fulfil his promise.

When Sangram heard that his mother was

[1] See "The Story of Jey Singh of the 109 Virtues."

returning in the company of Jey Singh, he guessed their intention, and determined to forestall it. By all the laws of Rajput hospitality he was bound to refuse nothing to a guest, and it irked him that an outsider should interfere between him and his mother, as it had irked him that his mother should interfere between him and his chieftains. So he waited until the Rani and the Raja had reached the last stage of their journey, and then rode forth from Udaipur as if to receive them in state. Passing by the camp of Jey Singh, he drew rein before his mother's tent, put aside the curtains, and asked her blessing as in former days. He then escorted her home to the palace, and rode back to greet Jey Singh. From that day he took no more notice of the estrangement, except to say, "Family quarrels should be kept in families."

Under his rule, Mewar took no part in the affairs of the dying empire. While his neighbours and contemporaries, Ajit of Marwar and Jey Singh of Amber, were taking advantage of Delhi's straits to enlarge their borders, Rana Sangram turned all his attention to insuring that his people should lie down in safety within his dominions, and the eighteen actions in which he fought were for Mewar's defence, not for its aggrandisement.

One day he had just sat down to dinner. The dishes had been set before him, when in came a messenger to say that a body of Pathans from Malwa had descended upon some villages at Mundisore, plundering, spoiling, and carrying

away the villagers into captivity. The Rana sprang to his feet, thrusting aside the plate with his untasted meal, and commanded his servants to bring his armour. The great kettledrums rang out their summons at a word, and soon the terrace below his window was thronged with armed chieftains, who had hurried to learn whither the Rana would lead them. When they heard that the foes were the Pathans from Malwa, one and all exclaimed that the Rana must not degrade himself by riding out against such scum of the earth ; let him leave the task to them. He might trust them to take a fitting vengeance. Unwillingly the Rana agreed to stay where he was, and the chieftains rode gaily from the palace.

A few hours passed, and a haggard, wasted figure presented himself before the Rana ; it was the chieftain of Kanorh, who had been lying on his bed in the throes of a tertian fever when he heard that the kettledrums were sounding from the palace. At once he had risen and buckled on his armour, and he now craved to know his lord's pleasure.

The Rana's pleasure was that the sick man should go home to bed, but the chieftain refused to obey. He mounted his horse, rode at full speed after the avenging force, and overtook them just as they were about to encounter the enemy. Few of the Pathans lived to ride in another foray, and the lords of Mewar returned in triumph to the Rana. It was a fatal day, however, for the men of Kanorh. The chieftain himself was slain

in a charge, and his young son was grievously wounded.

At the conclusion of every audience or assembly, the betel or *pân* is always handed round to the chiefs. Those of the highest rank only are entitled to receive it from the Rana himself. The chieftain of Kanorh was not among these, but when the wounded youth had recovered sufficiently to be able to take his place in the assembly, Sangram with his own hands gave him the *pân;* and this, we are told, was thought by all sufficient honour to requite him for the death of his father and his own sufferings.

Great personal devotion must have blended with the traditional reverence for "the sun of the Hindus" for such a feeling to be possible, and it was well deserved, for Sangram was loyal to his chiefs as they were to him.

Once it befell that the first noble of Mewar, Saloombra, the head of the Chondawuts, had been sent by the Rana in command of the Mewar levy to join the imperial forces, then acting in Malwa. After obtaining a victory over the enemy, the levy returned to Mewar, and Saloombra, instead of hurrying at once to court to report himself to the Rana, asked leave to stop on the way and visit his family.

Forthwith some malicious busybody whispered to the Rana that he had better have a care; it was certain that Saloombra had been intriguing with Delhi, or with the enemies of Mewar. Why this haste to embrace wives and children? The

Rana might depend upon it that this visit was a device on the part of the chief to gather his vassals for a revolt, and that Saloombra's own guilty conscience made him unwilling to enter Udaipur.

Sangram heard all with his usual calmness until the accuser had finished, and then sternly and emphatically expressed his scorn. He knew that none of his chieftains would betray him, and he needed no proof of Saloombra's loyalty; but to show any suspicious persons that he trusted the head of the Chondawuts, he would send an express messenger bidding him to the palace without an instant's delay.

In the meanwhile Saloombra, having disbanded the levy and seen his followers depart to their homes, had ridden to his own estate. He had entered his palace, and his hand was on the door of the women's apartments, behind which mother, wives, and children had waited his coming. Ere he could draw aside the curtain a messenger called after him, "The Rana salutes you, and bade me bring this letter."

Dropping the curtain the chief turned, received the letter, and read that his presence was instantly commanded. "Bring my horse," he said, "and give my duty to my mother," and without another word or even a look for those behind the curtain, he mounted and galloped off to Udaipur.

There was sorry cheer in his palace in the city for a wearied man just returned from a campaign. His arrival was not expected, and he found an

empty house, with neither servants nor dinner. As he gazed about him disconsolately, on a sudden he was surrounded by the servants of the Rana; some brought provender for his tired horses; some spread couches for himself and his men; and a train came from the royal kitchen bearing dishes of food for the whole party.

Next morning Saloombra appeared before the Rana, and was received with more than ordinary kindness. When he was given leave to depart, the Rana announced that to the horse and the jewels, which were the usual gifts for one of Saloombra's rank to receive, he was about to add a grant of lands.

Saloombra bluntly asked the reason for the gift, and when this had been explained, refused to receive an inch of land. He had not earned it, he said, and he would not take it; such a recompense would have been out of proportion if the Rana had chopped off his head, instead of merely summoning him to court at an inconvenient moment. If the Rana wished to bestow a favour upon his servant, and he had leave to speak, he would ask that for all time to come, whenever he or his descendants should be called to Udaipur on the business of their lord, they might receive from the royal kitchen the same number of dishes that had been sent to him.

The request was granted, and in Tod's day the custom was still maintained. For the sake of the Chondawuts, it is to be hoped that Sangram was

not as rigidly economical in supplying their table as he is said to have been in providing for himself.

Sangram was resolved to check the extravagance and wastefulness that had embarrassed some of his predecessors. His revenues as Rana were drawn from a certain number of villages; he arranged and distributed these so that the tribute from each village was allotted to some separate item of his expenses. Thus, one set of villages supplied his food, another his clothes, another the needs of his Ranis, and so on; each village was under the charge of a special officer, who was directly responsible to the Prime Minister for providing what was required.

Once, through forgetfulness or carelessness, Sangram gave away one of these villages. Shortly afterwards he was sitting at table, and the plate of curds, which is part of every Rajput's dinner, was set before him. He asked for sugar. "O giver of food," replied the officer, who was responsible for it, "the Prime Minister says you have given away the village set apart for sugar."

"True," replied the Rana mildly, and he finished his curds without any sugar.

At another time, one of the greatest of his nobles, the chieftain of Kotario, ventured to find fault with the old-fashioned court dress worn at Mewar; it was too narrow, he said, too scanty; long sweeping folds would give proper dignity and elegance. The Rana heard him graciously and promised to alter the dress, and the chieftain

went home, delighted to think that henceforth the nobles of Mewar would be arrayed as fashionably as those of other courts.

In a little while he received an intimation that the Rana had confiscated two of his villages. Rack his brain as he might, he could think of no offence that could have deserved this; the Rana was not one to punish for a whim. Mortified and perplexed, he hastened to court, and humbly besought that he might be told how he had displeased his lord.

"You have not offended at all," answered the Rana; "the cause of your losing your villages is this. I have been examining my accounts, and I find that these alterations in the court dress for which you have asked will be very expensive. I cannot refuse a request that is made to me in person by one of the first among my nobles; but every single rupee of my own income is already allotted to some purpose. I find that the revenue of your two villages will just pay for the new court dress, and so I was obliged to take them, in order to let you have your wish."

The Kotario chief, thus cursed with a granted prayer, could only beg that the court dress might remain unchanged, and never made any further suggestions about costume to the Rana.

After the death of Sangram in 1734, Mewar steadily declined. His successors, feeble men of straw, were unable to check the tide of Mahratta invasion which swept over Rajast'han. Perhaps in some degree his policy of "splendid isolation"

for Mewar may have been a factor in its decay; the old order had changed, and the first of the Rajput states could no longer afford to keep aloof. Mewar could not stand in its own strength against the wolves of the Deccan. But at least he had retained the old simplicity, the energy, and the courage of the line of Bappa Rawul, had curbed the unruly temper of his own chieftains, and repelled all invaders.

It is too sad a task to follow in detail the decline of Rajast'han for the next seventy years. In the feuds and disorders that followed the deaths of Sangram in Mewar and Ajit in Marwar, Rajput was leagued against Rajput, brother against brother, and they were hounded on to the strife by an enemy that knew how to take advantage of their weakness. Upon single occasions, the Rajputs might seem to revive their old glory, but in the end the deliberate guile of the Mahratta was sure to triumph over the headlong valour of the Rajput. The Rajput fought for a point of honour, or for sheer joy of fighting; the Mahratta fought in a commercial spirit, for what he could get—so much so, that the Mahratta term for "to gain a battle" really meant "to spoil." The Rajput was indolent, when not roused by pride or the thirst for battle; the Mahratta was untiringly energetic as long as he had anything to gain, but would sacrifice nothing for pride or scruple. To sum it briefly, the Rajputs were gentlemen, and if the word may be allowed, "sportsmen"; the Mahrattas were neither the one nor the other. Where

two such hostile forces met, it was the former who were bound to go to the wall. It was not until a race from over-seas came between the wolves and their prey that Rajast'han had a chance of recovering itself.

THE STORY OF THE SONS OF AJIT

A MARWAR legend says that when Raja Ajit was on his way to marry a Chohan princess he found two lions in the path, one sleeping, the other awake. This was interpreted by his soothsayer to mean that his bride should bear him two sons, and that one should be a sluggard, the other a mighty warrior. The omen was fulfilled in the birth of the princes Abhye Singh and Bukhta, by whom Ajit was slain.

Great was the grief and dismay throughout Marwar at Ajit's assassination. Besides the horror of seeing the sons the murderers of their father, Ajit was a strong man, who had contrived, during the disorders which followed the death of Aurangzib, to avenge his own and his father's wrongs, by snatching anything that he could from Aurangzib's successors, and in spite of his ingratitude to Doorga-das, he was generally beloved by his Rahtores. All his queens resolved to burn themselves upon his funeral pyre; the Chohan princess was urged to live for her sons, but she refused. She had been wakened from her sleep by Ajit's blood flowing over her bosom, and that

blood had been shed by Bukhta's dagger; Bukhta had flung into the midst of the assembled nobles the letter from Abhye Singh that incited to the murder; the flames were less cruel than her own sons.

If the means by which Abhye Singh reached the throne could ever have been forgotten, he might have been written down among the best of the rulers of Marwar. His great defect was the Rajput indolence carried to an incredible degree; but when once roused to action, he was pre-eminently brave among a race of brave men, and he prided himself upon being the best swordsman in Rajast'han.

Upon one occasion his skill had nearly caused some dire catastrophe. He had given his daughter in marriage to Siwai Jey Singh of Amber. The Cuchwaha tribe to which Jey Singh belonged had the reputation of being less formidable in battle than the other Rajput clans, and Jey Singh himself loved a table of logarithms better than a sword, and would rather listen to a mathematical treatise than to the music of steel upon steel. Even in the presence of the Emperor, Abhye Singh lost no opportunity of mocking his son-in-law. "You are called a *Cuchwa*,"[1] he would say, "but it is really Cuswa, from the *Cus* [grass], and your sword cuts as deeply as one of its blades."

If Jey Singh were not a redoubtable warrior, he was more to be feared than any other of his contemporaries, for he always succeeded in getting the better of an enemy. He determined to avenge

[1] Cuchwa or Cuchwaha = tortoise.

himself upon his father-in-law, and laid a plot with the help of one of the Emperor's favourites, Kirparam, the Paymaster-General.

It befell one day that all the chieftains and nobles were assembled in the Emperor's presence, and amongst them were Abhye Singh and Jey Singh. Kirparam began to talk of the marvellous swordsmanship of the Raja of Marwar, and to praise his feats in tones designedly raised to reach the Emperor's ear.

"I have heard much of your skill with the sword," said the Emperor at last, turning to Abhye.

"I can use it upon occasion, sire," answered the Rajput, swelling with pride.

"Aye," chimed in Kirparam; "has your Majesty heard that with a single stroke the Raja can smite off the head of a buffalo?"

"If this be true, I would fain see it done," said the Emperor. "Let a buffalo be brought at once into the courtyard."

Nobles, officers, and attendants crowded together to see Abhye Singh prove his strength, as the Raja drew his sword and swaggered out into the ring. Even his fierce countenance changed when he beheld the animal which was led forth; the buffalo, which Jey Singh had arranged to have in readiness, was no ordinary beast of its kind. It was a huge brute that had been fattened in rich pastures until it had reached an enormous height and girth; no one who looked at the vast proportions of its neck could think that any man alive would be able to cleave it at a single blow.

The Raja halted. "I crave your Majesty's permission to retire to the guardroom for one moment," he said.

The Emperor signed assent, and Abhye withdrew. Once inside the guardroom, he drew forth his opium and swallowed a double dose. Then once more he appeared in the courtyard. Rolling his blazing eyes around the watching faces, he saw Jey Singh, whom he guessed to be responsible for the buffalo, standing beside the Emperor, and waiting for his discomfiture. For an instant he turned towards the throne, and Jey Singh hastily whispered to the Emperor to beware; Rajput chiefs, when excited by opium and an affront to their dignity, had been known ere now to "run amok" in the court, and raise their hands against the highest in dignity. But Abhye, after glaring upon his son-in-law, stepped towards the buffalo, and whirled his sword on high in both hands. A flash of light through the air, the sound of a blow upon some solid heavy substance, and the buffalo's head lay on the ground, while Abhye Singh lay flat on his back beside its carcase, from the violence with which he had struck. All applauded his might, and Jey Singh's revenge was foiled.

"But," says the chronicler, "the Emperor never asked the Raja to behead another buffalo."

Throughout the twenty years of Abhye's reign his brother, Bukhta, was a constant anxiety. Energetic and ambitious, Bukhta was never contented to pass his time in rest and quietness, and showed plainly that he would not be always satis-

fied with the territory of Nagore, which had been handed over to him after his brother became lord of Marwar. Bukhta was well aware that Abhye distrusted him, and in order to keep the Raja occupied, and prevent him from interfering in Nagore, ingeniously contrived to embroil him with his neighbours. Thus he fomented a quarrel between Marwar and Amber, and Jey Singh was worsted in an action fought under the walls of Bikanir, which town he had attempted to relieve in defiance of Abhye, who was besieging it. But the Rahtores gained nothing by their victory; Bikanir was relieved, and in his flight Jey Singh even contrived to bear away a trophy, the tutelary god of Bukhta. This, we are told, he bore home in triumph, married him to the tutelary goddess of Amber with great rejoicings, and sent him home to Bukhta "with compliments." All parties having had their fill of fighting for the present, the Rana of Mewar made peace between them, and all were satisfied.

Shortly after this, and before his brother had found any more occupation for him, Abhye Singh died, leaving as his successor his son, Ram Singh, a young man who, to judge from the Rajput chronicles, must have been a compound of Rehoboam and Edward II.

The first signs of trouble appeared on the day when Ram Singh was to be installed as Raja of Marwar. By rights Bukhta should have been present with the usual gifts, to mark the *teeka* upon his nephew's forehead as the first of the Rahtore

chieftains. Instead of this he sent his presents and salutations by a proxy; and the proxy whom he chose to represent him was his aged foster-mother.

The foster-mother of a Rajput prince or noble was a most important personage, treated, so long as she lived, with the greatest honour by her nursling and his family. These women have often influenced political as well as domestic affairs. But the young Raja's fury was ungovernable when his uncle's messenger presented herself. "Go back to your master," he cried, "and ask him if he takes me for an ape, since he sends an old hag to give me the *teeka*." He rejected all Bukhta's gifts with haughty displeasure, and demanded that his uncle should surrender part of his territories.

Back to her foster-child went the insulted nurse, and the Raja's message lost nothing in the telling. But Bukhta returned a humble and dutiful answer; all Nagore, he said, was at the Raja's command if he wished for it.

In a short time the Raja's gibing tongue and youthful insolence had made him enemies of half the Rahtore chieftains. All his confidence was given to a low-caste favourite, and he not only neglected the old counsellors who had stood by his father, but mocked them to their faces. Kunniram of Asope, the head of the Koompawut clan, one of the greatest of the Marwar nobles, was wrinkled and ugly; Ram Singh forthwith dubbed him "the monkey." A still greater chief, Koosul

Singh of Ahwa, the head of the Champawuts and hereditary Prime Minister of Marwar, was short, sturdy, and common-looking; the Raja called him "the turnspit dog."

It was not safe to jest with a Rahtore, and any one but the foolish Raja might have taken warning from Koosul Singh's retort when he had been called by his nickname in public. "Yes, I am the cur that dares bite the lion." But Ram Singh was infatuated. Shortly afterwards, when he sat with the Champawut chief in the gardens of Mundore, he asked him, "What is this tree?"

"'Tis the *champa*, sire," answered the chief; "the pride of your garden, as I am of your Rajputs."

"Let it be cut down and uprooted at once," said the Raja. "Nothing that bears the name of *champa* shall exist in Marwar."

After this Koosul Singh avoided his sovereign's presence, until he was told that the Raja was about to set forth on an expedition against Bukhta, by way of avenging himself for the slight on the day of his coronation. Dismayed at the folly of Rahtore fighting Rahtore, when there were so many enemies beyond the bounds of Marwar, the chieftain hurried to the castle in a vain hope of remonstrating with the Raja. He had scarcely taken his seat among the assembled nobles when the graceless young prince began to mock and deride him, taunting him with his ugliness, and ending with the words, "Let me see your hideous face as seldom as can be."

The chieftain started to his feet, dashing his shield upon the ground. "Beware," he cried, as he glowered upon the Raja, "you have insulted a Rahtore who can turn Marwar upside down as easily as yonder shield." And he stalked from the hall without another word.

He was speedily joined by Kunniram of Asope, in a state of wrath that equalled his own. Not content with having made a mortal enemy of Koosul Singh, the Raja had turned to Kunniram with the salutation, "Come along, old monkey." "When the monkey begins to dance, you will have some mirth," was Kunniram's answer, as he, too, left the presence.

A short conference convinced both the chieftains that they could have no more to do with the son of Abhye, and that the hopes of Marwar were with Bukhta. Gathering their men, they rode away towards Nagore, and in their company rode a personage quite as important as themselves—the chief bard of Marwar.

News was brought to Bukhta that the lords of Ahwa and Asope had crossed his boundary. Knowing that it must be no light cause that brought the two pillars of Marwar to Nagore, he took horse and rode to meet them, arriving at their encampment at an hour when both the chiefs were asleep. He insisted on passing into the tent of Koosul Singh; the attendants would have wakened their master, but he forbade them, and sitting down beside the bed, waited until the old chief should rouse himself.

Hearing some stir and movement in his tent, Koosul Singh drowsily ordered the servant to bring his hookah. The man made no answer, and, as the chief opened his eyes, pointed silently to Bukhta. In a flash the chieftain realised his position, and knew that whether as Ram Singh's greatest supporter, or as a deserter from his cause, he had put himself irrevocably into the power of Ram Singh's uncle.

It was not the Rajput custom to trouble over the inevitable, and although, refreshed and cooled by sleep, he was no longer so embittered against his Raja, he saw that it was too late to draw back, and accepted the situation cheerily. "Well," he said, rising from his low couch, and saluting Bukhta, "there is my head; henceforth it is yours."

To do him justice, Bukhta is said to have pleaded earnestly with both chiefs to forgive his nephew's rudeness, and even to have offered to be their mediator with the Raja, who was certain to have learned by this time that they were in Nagore. But both knew they had gone too far to retreat, and were implacable. The chief bard also declared that he would never return to Jodhpur, and thus Bukhta gained the allegiance of the three greatest men in Marwar.

On hearing that Ahwa, Asope, and the bard were with his uncle, Ram Singh sent another message, demanding the instant surrender of the town of Jhalore. Again Bukhta returned a soft answer, declaring that he could not war against

his sovereign, and was ready to give him Jhalore if he came to take possession. But Ram Singh would be satisfied with nothing but the ruin of Bukhta and Bukhta's adherents; he marched against Nagore, and all Marwar was divided against itself.

Several skirmishes took place, without affecting either cause, before the two armies were drawn up in battle array for the decisive action on the plains of Mairta. The numbers were in favour of Bukhta, as the young Raja's insolence had alienated others besides Ahwa and Asope, but, as actual occupant of the throne, Ram Singh had been able to muster a goodly following, and a little might yet turn the scale on either side.

The scale was turned—again by the Raja's folly. With him to the battlefield he had brought one of his principal wives, a daughter of the Prince of Bhooj, who was of no small use to him. She could load, aim, and fire a matchlock as well as any trooper in his army, she was skilled in augury and divination, and she brought five thousand of her countrymen to fight under her husband's banner.

When the camp of Ram Singh's army had been pitched upon the plain, his men noticed, with dismay, that a raven had lighted upon the Rani's tent. A worse omen could scarcely have been found, and when the accursed bird began to croak, all drew breath with a sense of coming disaster.

"Croak! croak!" went the raven, and all the

Raja's army within earshot accounted the day as lost. It had opened its beak for the third and most fatal "croak," when a shot whistled through the air, and the bird fell dead among them.

All were unspeakably relieved, except the Raja, who was beside himself with wrath. "Who has dared to insult my presence by levelling a gun against one of the royal tents?" he cried. "Find out who he is, and drag him before me instantly."

There was a murmur, and a hesitation, and a confused moving to and fro—and at last some one bolder than the rest dared to whisper that the gun had been fired by the hand of the Rani herself.

The Raja burst into a flood of the coarsest abuse. "Tell her she may leave my kingdom and go back to the place whence she came," he concluded.

Vain were the remonstrances and entreaties of the Rani. After much sending backwards and forwards, the Raja vouchsafed to grant her a parting interview before she left him for ever, but all her warnings were of no avail. He had said that she should go, and go she should, and he clung to his point with the dogged stupidity of a fool. "Farewell, then," said the Rani, when she saw that she could not save him from himself; "in losing me, you lose Marwar." And she left the camp at once, followed by the five thousand men of Bhooj, who might have saved the throne for her husband.

For two days the battle raged. There was no advantage of ground to be taken by either side

upon the smooth level plain; it was a hand-to-hand fight, wherein each picked his man and strove with him until the death. All Marwar was desolated by the two days' strife; brother was arrayed against brother, kin against kin, and some of the Rahtore clans were well-nigh exterminated. All had gathered to the field, from the worn and scarred leaders of the Champawuts and Koompawuts, to the heir of Mehtri, a gallant boy, who left his bride at the moment when their hands were joined, on receiving Ram Singh's summons, and rode to his death in all the bridal array—the coronet, the gold necklace, and the pearl earrings, which he had not time to lay aside. Alas for his virgin widow! for his corpse remained on the field of Mairta, and only his bloodstained turban was borne home to her, to be clasped in her embrace on her funeral pyre.

On the shores of a lake where the battle raged most fiercely, there stood a monastery of holy men. When the balls of both armies began to rain into the grounds on the first day, all the monks took to flight, having no wish to be sent to heaven before their time. Only their patriarch remained, calm and inflexible, although the shot flew about him like hail. When they realised his plight, both armies sent messengers, entreating him to withdraw to a place of safety. The old man refused to budge an inch for either of them; if he was fated to die by a shot from a Rahtore gun, he said, it was useless for him to try to escape his fate; on the other hand, if the gods designed him

to live, no weapon could have power to slay him, and he might as well stay where he was. But in either case, as his monastery and grounds were not "charmed," he commanded both parties to go and settle their differences elsewhere. Night was then drawing in, and both the hosts obeyed him, and lay down to rest beside their arms.

At the close of the second day Ram Singh was beaten back to the town of Mairta. But Mairta was not a place easily capable of defence; it was too straggling, spread over too large an extent of ground, and moreover the hearts of all were with Bukhta—save those of the men who lay upon the battlefield, having died in the cause of their worthless Raja. At dead of night Ram Singh fled away with a few adherents, and put the crowning touch to his folly by calling for help upon the Mahratta leader, Jey Appa Sindhia.

In the meanwhile Bukhta, having met with no opposition, had marched upon Jodhpur, and was there installed upon the throne of his father, to the contentment of nearly every Rahtore in Marwar. When tidings came that Jey Appa was about to invade Marwar, such a host flocked to the banner of the new Raja that the Mahratta, seeing that there would be more hard knocks than spoil to be gathered, and true to the principle of his race never to fight except for solid advantage, drew back, and waited events.

Bukhta promised to be as good a Raja as had ever ruled Mewar. Brave, overflowing with strength and vitality, of high spirit, majestic in

appearance, liberal with his gifts, dexterous alike in wielding the sword or in writing verses, no one would have dreamed him to be the man who slew his own father by stealth. He was adored by all his Rahtores, who even if they could not but remember the dying words of Ajit's Queen—"May the bones of the murderer be consumed out of Marwar"—trusted that it might be long ere the curse was fulfilled.

Determined to forestall the Mahrattas, Bukhta advanced to Ajmer, which lies between Marwar and Amber, and thence sent a peremptory message to Eesuri Singh, Raja of Amber (the feeble successor of the great Jey Singh), bidding him bring his Cuchwahas to aid the Rahtores against the men of the Deccan.

As the alternative was to face Bukhta's hostility, Eesuri Singh was decidedly "between the devil and the deep sea." A quarrel with the Mahrattas was greatly to be deprecated, but Bukhta was a nearer neighbour than Jey Appa, and might be even more dangerous to Amber. Again, Eesuri's daughter was wedded to Ram Singh, who was with the Mahrattas, which was a reason for wishing to see Bukhta worsted; but Eesuri knew that Cuchwahas had a poor chance against Rahtores.

In his perplexity he turned to his wife; the daughter of a younger son of Raja Ajit, the Rani of Amber had no reason to love Bukhta, and she readily consented to remove him from her husband's way.

In a few days, Bukhta, then in camp on the border where the three states of Mewar, Marwar, and Amber meet, was surprised by a visit from his niece, the Rani of Amber. She brought fair-seeming messages from her husband, and many gifts — amongst others, a sumptuous "robe of honour," which the Raja accepted, and consented to wear.

Soon afterwards, a rumour flew from end to end of the camp, and struck dismay into the heart of every Rahtore. The Raja Bukhta was dying; the physicians talked of fever, but all remembered his niece's gift, and there were murmurs that the Rajput women had always known the secret of poisoning a robe.

Bukhta alone retained his high spirits and cheerfulness. "What, Sooja," he mocked, when the court physician declared that there was no help in his drugs, "is there no cure for me? Why do you take lands and money as your fees from my hands if you cannot cure me when I am sick? What is the good of your art?"

The physician was unmoved. In many Asiatic courts his life would not have been worth an hour's purchase under the circumstances, but he knew that he was safe with his master. With the Oriental love of parable, he ordered a little trench to be dug outside the tent and filled with water; this was soon done—the workmen perhaps deeming that it was part of some "magic" ceremonial to cure their Raja—and taking a drug from his case of medicines, the physician cast it

into the trench. To the wondering eyes of Raja and people, it seemed as if the water was at once congealed. "This can I do," proclaimed the physician, "it passes not the limits of human skill. But no power on earth can save the Raja."

Still calm and untroubled, Bukhta summoned the chieftains of Marwar to his tent, and bade them protect his son, Beejy Singh. When all had sworn to stand by the young prince, the Brahmins entered, to perform the last ceremonies and to receive the gifts of the dying man. Then, we are told, back upon the Raja's mind came the curse of the suttees, with the recollection that even now he was in a foreign land. "May his bones be consumed out of Marwar," he murmured, shuddering, and with the words his life fled.

His pyre was built upon the spot where he died, and there his ashes remained under a tomb which in Tod's day was still known as "The Shrine of Evil."

Thus the two cousins, Ram Singh, the son of Abhye, and Beejy Singh, the son of Bukhta, were left to fight it out. Bukhta being dead, the Mahrattas thought it worth while to interfere, although the bulk of the Rahtores were still true to Bukhta's son, and they swept down upon Mairta, where Beejy and his army were encamped.

The result was a three days' battle with great loss on either side. Fighting in the open country, where they could not skulk or crawl under cover

or lie in ambush, was never relished by the Mahrattas, and in spite of a disastrous blunder made by some of Beejy's men who cut the finest squadron on their own side to pieces under the belief that it belonged to Ram Singh's army, Sindhia was about to retire from the field, having had more than enough of it. Beejy, who was of a devout mind, had actually taken to his prayers, offering up thanksgivings for a victory while the battle still raged about him, when the tide was suddenly turned by a successful use of the diplomacy which the Rajput employs in difficult circumstances. The young chief of Roopnagurh, who was on the side of Ram Singh, sent out a horseman, who galloped to one of the chieftains in Beejy's army, and saluting him as a friend, asked, "Why do you go on fighting? Know you not that Beejy Singh, our lord, lies yonder, slain by a cannon-ball?"

The success of this stratagem was instant and complete. The news flew through the lines of the Rahtores, and Beejy's army melted like snow in summer. The princes of Bikanir and Kishengurh with their levies, the Rahtore chieftains who had fought with Bukhta, all fled headlong, each thinking only how to save himself and make terms with Ram Singh, and no one troubling to ask if Beejy were really dead or no. The guns were abandoned to the Mahrattas, and as evening fell upon the stricken field, Beejy too fled from the ruin that he could not stay, and took the road to Nagore, guided by Lall Singh, the chieftain of

Rahin, one of the few who had remained at his side.

On, on they stumbled through the night, the men weighed down by the load of their armour, some wounded, all heart-sick and exhausted, the steeds plunging heavily under the riders. At last, even in the darkness, it became clear to the Raja that they had missed the road to Nagore. Drawing rein, he called upon Lall Singh to retrace his steps and find the right path; Lall Singh demurred, shuffled, and finally pleaded that there was no great haste; it was true that he had led them towards his own home at Rahin, but that had taken them but a little way from the Nagore road; since he was so near home, would not the Raja give him leave to halt and visit his family, whom he wished to share his flight?

Beejy saw the true reason for these excuses, and turned away in silence. With only five horsemen at his back he rode on through the darkness, while the time-serving Lall Singh turned aside to his home at Rahin.

On, on, leaving Rahin on the right hand, as fast as their weary steeds could carry them, north-westwards to Nagore. At a town nineteen miles from their goal, the Raja's horse dropped dead; he mounted one belonging to an attendant, and laboured on, not daring to halt for rest or food, although the sun had risen, and the heat of the long Indian day was blazing round them.

But, if the men could hold out, the horses could bear the strain and the weight of their riders'

armour no longer. When the six fugitives reached Deswal, three miles farther on their road, their steeds were all foundered and lame. There was nothing to be done but to separate, and trust to good fortune.

Beejy threw aside his armour and all signs of his rank, and wandered alone about Deswal until he came upon a sturdy peasant driving a yoke of oxen in a rough cart. Entering into conversation with the man, he mentioned that he had business at Nagore, and asked whether the peasant could take him thither by the dawn of the next day.

The peasant demurred; it was sixteen good miles to Nagore, and he should have to drive all night. The Raja urged him, offering five rupees as his fare, and at length the man grudgingly consented, on condition that he should be paid in "the new currency," not in the old debased coinage.

Through another night the Raja of Marwar fled in the darkness, sitting beside the peasant on the rough seat of the cart. The oxen went well, but to Beejy they seemed to crawl; and as the hours passed, and still Nagore seemed distant as ever, he took up the driver's cry of "*Hank! hank!*" to urge them on. At this the peasant lost his temper, and rated his passenger in no civil terms. "Who are you, I should like to know, to be hurrying my cattle at this rate? It would be more becoming for a strapping fellow like you to be fighting at Mairta for the Raja Beejy, than to be rushing off

to Nagore in this way. One would think you had the men of the Deccan at your heels; but hold your tongue, for I'll not drive a whit the faster for all your shouting."

The Raja meekly subsided into silence, and sat beside the peasant without more ado until the morning broke. Then, as the oxen lumbered over the two miles of road that still separated them from Nagore, the driver for the first time began to look closely at his passenger; and after a while, in spite of weariness, two days' flight, and a hasty disguise, he recognised the features of Raja Beejy.

In an instant he had sprung from the cart, and was pouring out apologies and excuses. He had been sitting on the same level as his sovereign, and had spoken to him as to one of his own rank; what could he have deserved? But the Raja was past caring for etiquette. "I pardon you," he said, "for it is needful. Get up again in your place." The driver protested that nothing should induce him to take such a liberty, but, as the Raja insisted, he was forced to obey. He shared what little food he had—curds and cakes of coarse flour—with the Raja, and never ceased vociferating, "*Hank! hank!*" until they reached the gates of Nagore.

There he received his five rupees, as an earnest of better rewards to come when the Raja should regain his throne. When Tod wrote the "Annals," the carter's descendants still held the lands granted to their ancestor by Beejy, on condition of their

supplying the Raja with curds and cakes such as Beejy had eaten on the way to Nagore.

Those of Beejy's adherents who had survived the fight with Sindhia gathered to him at Nagore, and for six months they bore a close siege. In the meanwhile the chief towns and fortresses of Marwar were falling into the hands of Ram Singh and his Mahratta allies, and Beejy soon became aware that his cause was hopeless unless he could obtain help from without.

He had with him in the city five hundred swift dromedaries. On each of these he mounted two Rahtores, and taking advantage of the carelessness of the Mahrattas, broke through their lines, and in four-and-twenty hours was at Bikanir with his men.

But the Prince of Bikanir, who had been one of the first to leave the field on the rumour of Beejy's death, had no wish to imperil himself again in Beejy's cause, and gave him a cold welcome. The Raja, still undaunted, mounted his dromedary once more, and in another twenty-four hours was under the walls of Jeypore, demanding help from Eesuri Singh.

Here he was better received than at Bikanir. He and his followers were taken into the "Traveller's Hall," and in a short while notice was brought that Eesuri was coming to visit his guests. With the greatest effusion the lord of Amber welcomed Beejy, embraced him affectionately, and sat down beside him to interchange the usual compliments.

Beejy had brought with him a Rahtore chief

named Jowan Singh, who was high in his favour, and he was surprised to see that, while the two Rajas were greeting each other, this man, usually so tenacious of his post on the right hand of Beejy, passed behind them, and squatted down, as if by accident, on the flowing skirts of Eesuri's robe. Eesuri, too, noticed the movement, and said lightly, "Why, chief, you have taken your seat in the background to-day."

"The day requires it, Maharaja," answered Jowan Singh significantly; then he turned to his master, "Arise, depart!" he cried, "or you may lose life and liberty."

Beejy knew the reputation of the Cuchwahas, and needed no second warning; he sprang to his feet and left the hall. Eesuri strove to follow, but found himself pinned down by the weight of Jowan Singh, who, keeping his position on the skirt of the robe, held his dagger to Eesuri's throat, and coolly shouted after Beejy, "Send me word when you are mounted."

The Cuchwaha chiefs who had accompanied their Raja stared on one another blankly and helplessly, while Jowan Singh moved not an eyelid, and the Rahtores hurried to mount their dromedaries. In a few moments the word came back that Beejy had mounted and waited only for Jowan Singh.

Unembarrassed by the situation, the chief slowly sheathed his dagger, rose to his feet, and salaamed to the Raja of Amber. Baffled and shamed as he was, the Raja could not help admiring the man

who had outwitted him. He too rose, returned the salutation, and as Jowan Singh left the hall, turned to the Cuchwaha chiefs. "Behold a picture of fidelity!" he cried. "It is in vain to hope for success against such men as these."

Jowan Singh had received a warning from his father-in-law, one of the greatest of the Amber chieftains, that Eesuri meditated treachery against Beejy, and had thus acted upon it.

Back to Nagore rode Beejy, and made his way into the town as easily as he had quitted it. Another six months passed, and his case was well-nigh desperate, when two soldiers, one a Rajput, the other an Afghan, came before him with a proposal. If he would undertake to provide for their families, they would rid him of one of his enemies, and the rest would soon disappear.

Jey Appa Sindhia was going through his ceremonial washings at his tent-door when he was disturbed by two camp sutlers, who were quarrelling violently over a bundle of accounts, and called upon him to settle their difference. Gradually, while they shouted and gesticulated, and hurled abuse at each other's female kin, they drew closer and closer to the Mahratta. Two daggers flashed in the air; two blows were given, with a cry of "This for Nagore!"—"This for Jodhpur!"—and Jey Appa fell dead before his tent.

A wild confusion arose, in the midst of which the Afghan was slain, and the Rajput mingled with the crowd, and, creeping through a drain, made his way into Nagore with his story. The

work was done. The Mahrattas were weary of the siege, and disorganised by the loss of their head. The offer of a tribute, and of the fortress and district of Ajmer, easily induced them to forsake Ram Singh, and Beejy became Raja of Marwar.

But the cession was fatal. Ajmer was ever the key of Rajast'han, and from that hour it was in the hands of the Mahrattas.

Beejy reigned for thirty-one years of disaster and conflict, dying in 1794. Ram Singh died in exile at Jeypore in 1773, having from first to last fought twenty-two battles in the hope of regaining his throne.

THE STORY OF THE VIRGIN PRINCESS

THE eighteenth century was a time of anarchy and destruction, of robbery and despoiling throughout Northern India. Wave after wave of invasion had swept down from the north over the fertile plains of Hindostan, as when one great roller breaks, and another follows close upon it ere it has had time to sweep back, and their waters rush confusedly together far up the beach. The Moghul Empire, founded long ago by Babar at Delhi, had been slowly falling to pieces, ever since the days when Aurangzib's intolerance had begun to undo the work of his fathers; one by one, the outlying provinces had declared their independence, or quietly maintained it. Nadir Shah, the Persian, had given his soldiery half a day's licence to burn Delhi and slay the inhabitants, ere he carried off the wealth that had accumulated there for more than three hundred years; then other foreign invaders took heart by his example and swooped down in their turn. The empire was rotten to the core. The Mahrattas, an upstart race with many bad qualities and few good ones, whose revolt had troubled the last years of Aurangzib, turned against

their lord; sometimes they helped him to defeat an enemy; more often, they attacked him on their own account, and whether as foes or as allies, they seized every opportunity of tearing a province or a district from the dismembered empire. The feeble puppets who sat upon the throne of Akbar could do nothing to save the country; they could not even save themselves. "Deposed"—"blinded"—"murdered"—such are the words recorded after their names in the chronological tables. Few, save an expert historian, in reading of them, care to discriminate between Jahandar Shah and Alamgir, between Shah Alam and Ahmad Shah. Sayad kingmaker, Afghan, Rohilla, or Mahratta conqueror, played with them at his will, until a nation from over the sea came to establish a new empire out of the fragments of that raised by the sons of Timur.

In the disastrous years between the death of Aurangzib and the overthrow of the Mahratta power by our arms, few of the tributary princes suffered more grievously than did the lords of Rajast'han. Slow to submit to a Moghul emperor, resisting alike the wise and kindly Akbar and the bigoted and cruel Aurangzib, when once they had sworn allegiance to Delhi they were "true to their salt." For a long time they strove to prop a falling throne, in the same spirit in which they had laboured to overturn it when it was strongest; but the task was hopeless, and the demoralisation of the empire affected them also. They turned against each other, plotted, intrigued, betrayed,

assassinated, with a faithlessness they had learned from their conquerors. A succession of minorities weakened Mewar, and the few strong men who were left thought of their own aggrandisement, not of the general good and the Rajput honour. Mahratta and Pathan were ready to foment strife, to egg one against the other, to interfere in a quarrel, and under pretence of an alliance, to plunder and levy tribute. The "land of princes," like the Moghul Empire, seemed to be gasping in her death agony, while *parvenus* and savages crushed princes and nobles beneath their feet. One more humiliation was needed, and although it seemed to all, at the time, to complete the ruin, it was the beginning of happier days. Men had suffered and fought and died in vain for Rajast'han; it remained for a woman to save the country and the people when men could do no more.

Those who would read the story at length may turn to the annals of Rajast'han, and trace it through a wilderness of tortuous intrigues, plot and counterplot, battles, murders, and a confusion of unfamiliar names. Against this gloomy background shines out the form of the "Flower of Rajast'han"—Kishna Komari, the virgin princess.

She was the daughter of Bheem Singh, Rana of Mewar, who, in an evil hour for himself, succeeded to his brother's throne at the age of eight. In peaceful times his forty years' reign might have brought little disaster to Mewar, if it added nothing to her glory; at the end of the eighteenth century, the strongest man who ever led the sons of Mewar

to battle would have found a difficulty in keeping his place, and Rana Bheem was essentially a weak man. His mother continued to rule him and the country long after he was of an age to take the government into his own hands; and freed from her thraldom, he fell under the sway of successive ministers. Without, the empire was being torn in pieces by Mahratta and Pathan; within, Mewar was distracted by the feuds of two rival Rajput clans, the Chondawuts and the Suktawuts. Of old, these clans had vied with each other who should be first in the breach or on the field of battle; they now disputed who should rule Mewar in the name of the Rana. For a time the Chondawuts had the upper hand, and kept it, in spite of sundry skirmishes in which some of their members were slain. Then when their chief's greed and arrogance had passed all bounds, the Queen Mother threw herself into the arms of the Suktawuts. From that time the evil became beyond the power of man to unravel, and the history of Mewar reads like some nightmare dream.

A momentary return to the old traditions, and a Rajput campaign against the Mahrattas, followed by a crushing defeat from Sindhia and Holkar—the treacherous murder of the Suktawut Minister by a Chondawut, who came before the helpless young king with hands stained with the victim's blood—a civil war between the clans, while the land lay waste and untilled, the prey of countless robbers, who, like the German Freiherrs or the moss troopers of the Debateable Land, gathered

round a leader of their own choice, and levied blackmail on the countryside—all these evils at length forced the Rana to call on Sindhia for help. It was as fatal as when the cats invoked the arbitration of the monkey. The Mahrattas swooped down like a flight of locusts, blighting the land wherever they went. Treachery was rife on all sides ; a Chondawut for a bribe surrendered Chitor to Sindhia. Then Sindhia went back to Poona, and his lieutenant Umbaji for eight years oppressed Mewar. Rapacious and shameless as Umbaji was, to a certain extent he protected the Rana's interests, and he succeeded in wringing the Crown lands from the lawless chiefs who had seized upon them ; but when he was promoted to be Sindhia's viceroy in Hindust'han, and handed over Mewar to the rule of deputies, who quarrelled amongst themselves, the distress was worse than ever.

It is impossible to give the details of the strife and misery of the following years. The death of the reigning Sindhia and the quarrels of his successor involved Mewar in fresh wars, which ended in riveting the chains by which the Rajputs were bound. Sindhia considered Mewar as a tributary fief, and quartered his armies upon it at his will. A war between Sindhia and Holkar was the excuse for either side to levy enormous fines upon the Rana, and he was forced to strip the ladies of his household not only of their jewels, but of all their possessions.

Amid all these troubles the Princess Kishna had

grown almost to womanhood. She was fifteen years old, of extraordinary beauty, and lovable as she was fair. The report of her grace and sweetness went throughout the land, and it was said that Sindhia himself had asked for her as a wife. But low as the Rana had fallen, he could not bear this degradation, and though the marriage would have been greatly to his interest, he refused it.

Then came an embassy to Udaipur from Juggut Singh, the ruler of Amber, who also sought to wed the princess. The lords of Amber did not bear a high reputation; they had been the first among Rajput princes to give their daughters in marriage to the Moghul Emperors. Juggut Singh, selfish, luxurious, debauched, was already winning an evil fame as the most dissolute prince of his age. But it behoved a father to find a husband for his daughter; in a few years Kishna would be considered too old to marry, and a beggar like the Rana could not be a chooser. So Juggut Singh's ambassador was favourably received, the proposals were accepted, and in course of time a bridal train, bearing the usual presents, set forth from his capital of Jeypore to the Rana's palace.

At this stage another suitor presented himself, a stronger man than Juggut Singh, but little more desirable as a husband. It was Raja Maun, who had succeeded his brother on the throne of Marwar, despite the claims of an infant rival, said to be a posthumous son of the late Raja. His plea was that the Princess Kishna had been betrothed to his brother, who had died ere the marriage could be

celebrated, and that as the contract was with the Raja of Marwar, not with any individual, he was his brother's heir in this respect, as in all else. To back this argument he brought the favour of Sindhia, who had been offended by Juggut Singh's refusal to pay him tribute. The Raja received peremptory orders from the Mahratta sovereign to break off the marriage with Amber, and hand over his daughter to Raja Maun.

As once before in his life, the Raja showed himself a son of his fathers, and he refused to break his word. Again he brought nothing but trouble upon himself. Sindhia's batteries arrayed about Udaipur proved a convincing argument, and when the Rana saw his tyrant within cannon-shot of his palace, he broke down and agreed to do whatever was required of him.

But Juggut Singh had the rashness of youth, and knew, moreover, that Raja Maun was not over secure upon his throne. With hostile races all around them, and their doom coming nearer day by day, Amber and Marwar strove with each other. The claimant whom Raja Maun had supplanted came forward and allied himself with Amber, and half the forces of Marwar went over to him in the first action. Defeated, his cause seeming hopeless, Raja Maun would have stabbed himself upon the field of battle; but his hand was stayed by one of the few who still held by him, and he was hurried away—the first of his line who had ever turned his back on the Cuchwahas. Had the enemy overtaken him, or marched straight

upon Udaipur and borne off the princess, they would have triumphed; but they gave Maun Singh time to reach his capital of Jodhpur, where he entrenched himself and waited events.

The allied forces surrounded Jodhpur, and spent six weary months in a close siege. Day by day their numbers lessened from scarcity of food, or from quarrels amongst themselves, and even when the town had fallen they were no nearer to laying hands upon Raja Maun, who in his strong castle of Joda still defied them. Jealousies were rife among the besiegers, and it needed but a touch to wake the smouldering heat into flame.

Juggut Singh, as he dallied in his tent before Joda, received a secret message from his mother that a Marwar force had surprised a body of his troops and cut them to pieces, and was now advancing upon Jeypore.

In dire dismay the prince hastened to return to the relief of his capital, and sent forty pieces of cannon—the spoil of Marwar—in advance. This was too much for the Marwar nobles, his allies, who had soon learned to hate the foolish, dissipated youth; forgetting their old griefs against Raja Maun and their late agreement with Juggut Singh, they fell upon the Amber troops, and took back their own again. Juggut Singh lost his head at this fresh desertion; he sent heavy bribes to the Mahratta commander to be allowed to retreat unmolested, and hurried to Jeypore in headlong flight, abandoning even his war elephant and all his baggage. He reached the city unharmed, and

lived to bring more disgrace upon his name; but many of his army dropped by the way, and for years afterwards their bones whitened the road to Jeypore.

Thus in armed strife and disorderly panic broke up the confederacy against the Raja of Marwar. As for the rival claimant to the throne, he was destined to give little more trouble. Ameer Khan, the Afghan commander of Sindhia's troops, feigned a secret attachment to his cause, and swore to desert Raja Maun for him, if his chief adherents would visit the Mahratta camp, and arrange terms of alliance. Forty-two of the most powerful chiefs of Marwar came on the appointed day, and sat watching the Nautch-girls posturing before them, unheeding that Ameer Khan had found some excuse for leaving the tent. Suddenly the tent fell upon them, and as the guests struggled helplessly beneath its folds, they were cut to pieces by the Mahrattas. Outside, their followers were mown down by grapeshot, before they could escape from the fatal place.

Raja Maun had triumphed in war and in love. The heads of his enemies were laid at his feet, and Ameer Khan, by Sindhia's orders, brought word to Udaipur that the Rana might choose between giving his daughter in marriage to Marwar and putting her to death. Sindhia's insulted dignity was now to be avenged. Vain was it for the Rana to protest and entreat, to humble himself before his foe, or to ask counsel of Ajit Singh, his minister, on whom he had relied. Ajit Singh, a

crafty scoundrel who veiled his ambition under a cloak of religious austerity, had come to an understanding with Ameer Khan. The princess must die for the sake of Mewar ; it would be a disgrace for the Rana to break his plighted word, and, moreover, were he to give her to Raja Maun, Juggut Singh would collect another army and harry the land that had already suffered more than it could bear. On the other hand, did the Rana keep his daughter within his zenana, or give her to her rightful bridegroom, then the armies of Sindhia would once more gather round Udaipur ; the Rana's palace would be sacked, his city laid in ruins, and while death, sword in hand, might be granted to him and his nobles, worse than death would befall their wives and daughters at the hands of the Mahrattas. Let one die, to save the lives and honour of many.

The Rana yielded, overborne by this reasoning, and Kishna Bhai's fate was decided. But it was not so easy to find any one to slay her, as it was to persuade her father that she must be slain. Royal blood might only be shed by royal blood, and the first man who was chosen for the deed—a brave warrior, the Rana's kinsman—was overcome with horror when he was told what was required of him. "Let my name perish rather than that I should do this thing!" he cried. Then the Rana turned to his half-brother, who took dagger in hand and entered the zenana. In a short time he returned, without his weapon ; at the sight of Kishna Bhai in all her innocence and

loveliness, his heart had failed him, and the weapon had dropped from his trembling fingers, while he brokenly confessed the purpose for which he had forced himself into her presence.

It was clear that no man could be expected to do the deed of shame, and the Rana sought elsewhere for an executioner. In the palace of every Eastern prince there are jealousies cruel as the grave, hatreds bitter as death, and women who know other means of gratifying them than dagger or pistol. Even Kishna Bhai had her enemies behind the silken curtains of her father's palace, and they compounded a draught which was brought to her in her father's name.

While her mother made the palace resound with her cries and reproaches, the spirit of some virgin martyr whom Roman governors condemned to death seemed to descend upon Kishna Bhai. She drank the poison with a prayer for the Rana, and gently rebuked the grief of those around her. "Why grieve, my mother? I fear not to die. Am I not your daughter? A Rajput maiden is destined for sacrifice, and often enters this world but to be sent from it. Let me thank my father, who has allowed me to live till this day." [1]

Owing to some physical peculiarity in the victim, or to some error in compounding the draught, the poison failed to do its work; thrice, we are told, the cup was brought to her, and received with the same sweetness and serenity;

[1] The Rajputs often put to death their girl children, as their peculiar marriage laws made it difficult to provide them with husbands.

thrice, after swallowing the draught, she was unable to retain it. At length they mingled a strong opiate with the juice of flowers; smiling, she drank it, with a wish that this might prove the end, and calmly fell asleep, never to awaken.

Ajit Singh went to tell Ameer Khan that his commands had been obeyed. "Is this . your Rajput valour?" taunted Sindhia's envoy. The deed sent a shudder of horror throughout the length and breadth of Rajast'han, and many years after the death of Kishna Bhai, her father's people wept when telling her story.

The miserable Rana sat in his hall with Ajit Singh, his evil genius at his side. Well might he grieve, since the Rani, refusing to touch food or drink, had followed her child, and he was left with those who had destroyed the Flower of Rajast'han. Unannounced, without reverence or courtesy, an armed chief came sounding through the hall—Sangram, leader of the Suktawut clan; he strode before the dais, and lowered upon the Rana with unbent head. "O dastard!" he thundered, "thou who hast shamed thy royal house for ever! Never was dishonour brought upon our race until now, and thou hast defiled us with a stain that may never be cleansed. The line of Bappa Rawul is surely ended, and this is a sign that the gods have willed our ruin."

Then, turning from the cowering Rana to his minister—"Thou vile son of Rajput blood, dust, dust upon thy head! May'st thou die childless,

and thy name die with thee! Was the Pathan battering at these gates? Had he forced his way into the women's apartments? Was it thus our fathers battled for their honour? Was it thus they faced the men who sacked Chitor? But go—I speak not to Rajputs—for a Rajput knows how to die, sword in hand, on the open field, while his women give themselves to the flames. Had you done this, one of our line had been saved, as in the days of old, by the hand of the gods. But now our race is doomed to perish."

Neither Rana nor minister dared answer a word to the Suktawut, as he flung away from the presence. Time soon proved how awfully his words were to be fulfilled.

A few weeks afterwards, Ajit's wife and two sons died suddenly. Ajit himself, hated and shunned by all, put on pilgrim's dress and wandered from shrine to shrine, under pretence of expiating his sins; after a while, it was discovered that he was renewing his political intrigues, while he performed religious exercises, and he was exiled to Benares. Out of ninety-five of the Rana's children, ninety-two died before their father, and but one of the survivors was a son.

Raja Maun of Marwar was cruelly oppressed by his ally, Ameer Khan, who slew the two friends in whom alone he trusted. Distraught with grief, and weary of being plundered and spoiled by foreign adventurers, the Raja abdicated

in favour of his son. In a short while the young man died under disgraceful conditions, and Raja Maun became to all appearance insane. The British Government took Marwar under its protection early in the nineteenth century, and Raja Maun availed himself of the opportunity to murder and drive into exile all the nobles to whom he owed a grudge. Hated by all, and suspecting every one, he brought his country to ruin, and left the materials for more feuds and strife behind him.

As for Juggut Singh of Amber, the story of his life has been considered too disgraceful to find a place in the "Annals of Rajast'han." Leaving low-caste favourites, such as a tailor or a shopkeeper, to rule in his place, he spent his days in the women's apartments, the slave of "Essence of Camphor," an Islamite mistress. He put the crowning touch to his shame by creating this woman queen of half his land, by coining money in her name, and by riding with her on the same elephant. As he was lost to all sense of honour, his chiefs contrived to arouse his jealousy of "Essence of Camphor," and she was seized and imprisoned in a castle where other ill-doers were confined. Once there, she was forgotten by her lover, and whether the chiefs, who had been insulted by a command to do reverence before her, took care that she should be prevented from causing further trouble, or whether she was allowed to die of old age in the dungeon, we hear no more of her. After

seventeen years of shame, Juggut Singh died, leaving no heirs, and Amber fell to a son born several months after his death, whose paternity was doubtful.

It is probable that the poisoned draught was less cruel to Kishna Bhai than life with Juggut Singh. She saved her country, though not as she deemed. Among those who were in Sindhia's camp when he came to forbid her marriage with the Prince of Amber, was a young subaltern in the East India Company's service — an insignificant personage, to whom none paid much heed. As he saw the humiliation of the Rana, and heard of the fate of the princess, his heart swelled within him, and he vowed to save Rajast'han from the wolves that were quarrelling over her. Many years passed ere the vow was fulfilled; but when James Tod bade farewell to India in 1822, after spending himself in labours for the good of the Rajput states, the "land of princes," no longer the prey of Pathan and Rohilla, of Mahratta and freebooter, was under British protection, and once more enjoyed peace and prosperity.

STORIES OF AMBER

THE STORY OF JEY SINGH OF THE ONE HUNDRED AND NINE VIRTUES

To the north of Mewar and Boondi, and west of Marwar and Bikanir, stretches the Rajput State commonly known as Jeypore, from its capital, or sometimes as Amber, its proper name being Dhoondar. Its ruling tribe is that of the Cuchwahas, or "Tortoises," for whom other Rajput clans have a disdain, on the ground that they are poor "men of their hands."

Bhagwandas of Amber was the first Rajput prince to give a daughter in marriage to the Moghuls of Delhi. He was succeeded by his nephew and adopted son, Maun Singh, whose name occurs over and over again in the history of Akbar's reign. He fought and quelled one of Akbar's rebellious brothers, overcame an Afghan revolt at Khyber, warred repeatedly against Pertap Rana of Mewar, and governed in succession Bengal, Behar, the Deccan, and Kabul, as the Emperor's lieutenant. A wild Rajput legend says that Akbar grew jealous of his greatness, and thought it safer to get rid of him. The means chosen was a poisoned sweetmeat, of which

Akbar himself partook, by a slight mistake, while Raja Maun did not taste it. The error was fatal, of course, to the Emperor; but this story is palpably untrue.

About the year 1615 Raja Maun died, having steered himself and Amber with great success through very troubled waters. The two Rajas of Amber who followed him were utterly worthless, and allowed the Marwar princes to take the lead at the Court of Delhi, to the indignation of the Cuchwahas.

One of the wives of the Emperor Jehangir was a Rajput princess, Joda Bhai of Bikanir, and she persuaded the Emperor to bestow Amber upon Jey Singh, Raja Maun's great-nephew. The story goes that Jehangir and Joda Bhai were standing together upon a balcony when Jey Singh passed below. "Ho, Raja of Amber," called the Emperor, "come and make your salaam to Joda Bhai, to whom you owe your throne."

It was a brilliant prospect for the youth, but even in the first moment of surprise and delight he did not forget the tradition of his race, which forbade a Rajput man to bow the head before a Rajput woman. How then should he salaam to one who, in the eyes of all Rajputs, was degraded by marriage with the infidel? "I will salaam to any lady of your Majesty's family," he answered respectfully, yet firmly, "but not to Joda Bhai."

The Rajput princess laughed good-humouredly. She knew the ways of her countrymen, and perhaps

was proud that one of them would not stoop, even to be hailed as Raja of Amber. "It matters not," she called gaily from the balcony, "I give you the *raj*[1] of Amber."

Jey Singh, thus raised to a throne, justified the choice of the Rajput princess, and became one of the greatest princes that ever ruled Amber. As a vassal of the empire he rendered great services to Aurangzib, not the least of which was the capture of the Mahratta outlaw, Sivaji Bhosla; but when he suspected that the Emperor was meditating Sivaji's death, he allowed the captive to escape.

The Mirza Raja — to give him the title by which he generally appears in Moghul history — did much to beautify his city of Amber. He made a lake, he laid out pleasure-gardens, and he added to the palace which his predecessor had begun. He built the Hall of Audience, the Diwan-i-Khas—which still delights all visitors to Amber—a hall supported on columns of red sandstone adorned by magnificent sculptures. No sooner was it finished than the rumour came to the Emperor Jehangir that his vassal had dared to build a hall of audience, the beauty of which surpassed all the glories of Agra or Delhi. This was not to be endured, and commissioners were sent to Amber with orders to throw down every one of the carven pillars.

When the commissioners arrived, the Mirza Raja greeted them with the utmost politeness,

[1] *Raj* = kingdom, principality.

and at once led them to the hall. Popular report, he said, had greatly exaggerated his humble efforts; far be it from him to dream of vieing with the splendours of the imperial city—but the commissioners might see for themselves. The commissioners looked about them, stared, gaped, and were quite at a loss; here was no trace of red sandstone, or of sculptures. The audience hall was supported by double rows of columns, the shafts of which were covered with pure white stucco. Back to Agra went the commissioners, to deplore the untrustworthiness of rumour, and Jey Singh's carved elephants remained safely hidden beneath their coating of stucco—where some of them are said to remain until this day, although some have been uncovered.

Instead of taking warning by this narrow escape, Jey Singh grew daily more and more haughty, and in the reign of Jehangir's successor, Aurangzib, he made it clear that he recked little of the power of Delhi. He would sit in *durbar*, we are told, surrounded by his twenty-two great chieftains, each of whom commanded a force of a thousand horsemen. In his right hand he would hold a glass, which he called by the name of "Delhi"; in his left, one which he called "Sattara," after the place then held by the Mahrattas. "There goes Sattara!" he would cry, flinging it upon the carpet; "the fate of Delhi is in my right hand, and with like ease I can cast it away."

When this speech was reported to Aurangzib, he determined that the Mirza Raja should not live.

He dared not attack him openly; poison should be the means, and Jey Singh's own son, then at the imperial court, was chosen as the agent.

The young man consented, on condition that he should succeed to the throne after Jey Singh's death. He mixed poison in his father's opium, and came back to receive his reward. But Aurangzib had no intention of keeping his word, and the parricide gained nothing but an insignificant little district. His elder brother, Ram Singh, became Raja of Amber, and did nothing worthy of note till his death. The fortunes of Amber declined yet more under the next Raja, Bishen Singh, and little but the memory of its old greatness was left when the throne became the seat of the greatest of the Cuchwahas—the Siwai Jey Singh, of the One Hundred and Nine Virtues.[1]

Those who visit the city of Jeypore—"the fairyland of the Parisian opera," as it has been called—however unobservant of the present or uninterested in the past they may chance to be, cannot help learning to know the name of its founder, Jey Singh, who came to the throne of Amber in 1638. It was he who built the rose-coloured "Palace of the Wind" in the centre of the town—"a vapoury impossible construction"; it was he who raised the Observatory where, night after night, he watched the stars, and worked out the intricate mathematical calculations that were the joy and pride of his life—more dear than even

[1] Or "deeds"; Tod uses either word to translate "Goon."

those fine-drawn political combinations, whereby he played off one adversary or ally against another for his own advantage. Even the old ruined city of Amber bears traces of his hand, although he forsook it for his new foundation of Jeypore; the marble pavilion in the palace garden, which is lined with pieces of looking-glass, was added by him to the courts and pleasure-houses raised by the first Jey Singh.

Bishen Singh, Maharaja of Amber, had a son by each of his two queens. The mother of one of the sons, Beejy Singh, was afraid to let him stay in his father's court, where intrigues for the succession would be sure to endanger his life, sooner or later. The hostility of the men without is less deadly for an Oriental heir presumptive or heir apparent than the intrigues of the women behind the veil, where polygamy embitters and intensifies jealousy. So Beejy Singh was sent away to his mother's kinsfolk, while the other boy, Jey Singh, remained in Amber. In due course of time Bishen Singh was gathered to his fathers, and then Jey Singh succeeded by right to the throne.

Shortly afterwards there came to Amber a messenger with a humble request from the absent Beejy Singh; since they were the sons of one father, would Jey Singh grant to him the fertile district of Busswa as his appanage? Jey Singh made no difficulties, and thought to have heard the last of his brother.

Then came a thunderbolt; a trusty friend at

the court of Delhi sent word to Jey Singh to go warily, or he would find himself supplanted by one of his own blood. Beejy Singh had been intriguing to win the throne of Amber for himself; his mother, from her seclusion, had watched over him and advised him, ever since he left her kin to visit the Emperor's court. She had sent him costly jewels, whereby he gained the friendship of Kumrodin Khan, the Vizier, who was all-powerful with the Emperor. Now, he had offered a contingent of five thousand horse, and a vast sum of money, if he might displace Jey Singh as Maharaja; the Vizier had given his own surety for the fulfilment of the pledge, the Emperor had assented, the necessary documents were being prepared—and Jey Singh had better look to himself.

On receiving the letter with this unwelcome piece of news, Jey Singh took counsel first of all with his Nazir, who reminded him that the bard Chund, the fountain of Rajput wisdom, had laid it down that four powers govern all human events —Arguments, Gifts, Force, and Stratagems. "Now this," he observed, "is no case for force or for arguments, and wealth is useless; remains stratagem alone, and on that we must rely. The conspiracy can only be defeated through the conspirator."

As a warrior Jey Singh is said to have wanted little of being an absolute failure; as a diplomat he was worthy to have been an Italian of the Renaissance. Forthwith he assembled the heads of the twelve great families of Amber, who

came at his summons, the chief among them being Mohun Singh of Chomoo, the head of the Nat'hawuts. "Behold, evil is my case," he said; "you placed me on the throne of Amber; and now my brother, who would be satisfied with Busswa, has Amber forced upon him by the Vizier, Kumrodin Khan."

Whether the chiefs literally believed this statement or not, they were convinced that it was to their interest to support Jey Singh, and they answered him with words of encouragement. Let him leave all in their hands, they said, and this danger should pass away from him; but he must be ready to give up Busswa. Jey Singh swore a solemn oath that Busswa should become his brother's property as soon as they required it, and to clinch the assurance, made out the grant there and then, in the name of Beejy Singh. He then dismissed the council, who retired to consider their next step.

In a little while Beejy Singh received messages from the Council of Amber, inviting him to a friendly discussion, promising that Busswa should be his as soon as he came to receive it, and assuring him that Jey Singh's word was pledged for his safety. But Beejy Singh was also a Cuchwaha, and he knew better than to trust his brother. Not a step would he stir towards Amber, he vowed; not a foot would he set on his native soil, if no better safe conduct were offered to him.

The council returned that he need not fear;

did he come at their invitation, the twelve great families of Amber pledged themselves for his safety, and should Jey Singh show any sign of treachery, they swore to dethrone him, and set up Beejy in his place.

Kumrodin Khan, the Vizier, was ill content when, on the strength of these assurances, Beejy Singh demanded leave of absence to go to Amber and be invested with his promised fief. Experience had taught him that the Cuchwahas were to be trusted to keep faith no longer than suited their own convenience. But the pledges of the "twelve great families" could not altogether be disregarded, and, moreover, this might be an opportunity of winning Amber. So he gave Beejy Singh an escort of 6000 imperial horse, sent two nobles of the court—(one, had he known it, the friend who had sent timely warning to Jey Singh) —to witness the investiture, and, with many misgivings, saw the train depart.

In the meanwhile Jey Singh had been posing as an example of brotherly affection. He originally proposed Amber as the meeting-place, but when Beejy dissented, was quite ready to let it be Chomoo, the home of the chief of the Nat'hawuts, who held the same position in Amber as Saloombra in Mewar, or Ahwa and Asope in Marwar. At the last moment the place of meeting was changed from Chomoo to Sanganair, six miles to the south-west of Jeypore, and there Beejy set up his camp on his arrival within the bounds of Amber.

As Jey Singh was sitting in the durbar with his chiefs, waiting to ride to Sanganair, the Nazir entered with a message from the Queen-Mother, who prayed, he said, that her eyes might be blest by the sight of the reconciliation between her two dear sons. With the submissiveness that he had shown throughout the progress of the negotiations, the Maharaja would return no answer without consulting the chiefs, who one and all declared that there could be no objection to granting such a touching request. The royal litter was immediately prepared, and, followed by three hundred covered chariots, it moved slowly along the high-road to Sanganair. The people crowded forth to see their Rani go in state to bless the ending of the feud, and as the procession went by, the attendants scattered handfuls of corn.

It was through a rejoicing people that Jey Singh and his chieftains rode on their way to Sanganair. The Maharaja was all smiles and graciousness, and when he embraced his brother in presence of the assembly at Sanganair, all were touched by his affectionate manner. "Here is the grant of Busswa," he cried, with deep feeling, "but if your heart is set upon Amber, so be it. Rather than let there be division between us, I will yield to you my birthright, and myself retire to Busswa."

Even Beejy Singh was melted at this generosity, and he replied that, thanks to his brother's kindness, all his wants were satisfied.

After the chiefs had been edified for a little

time with the spectacle of this brotherly emotion, the Nazir again brought a message from the Rani. Would the brothers come and see her in the women's apartments, or should she descend to the hall to behold their accord? "I have no will but yours," said Jey Singh, turning to the council; "shall we go to the Rani, or will you withdraw while she comes here?" The chiefs thought it the Rani's due that the brothers should go to her, and Jey Singh, taking Beejy by the hand, led the way to the women's side.

At the door of the Rani's chamber, Jey Singh pulled the dagger from his girdle, and flung it to the eunuch who stood on guard. "What need for this here?" he said, as he entered. Beejy Singh, thinking it behoved him to follow this example, laid aside his dagger, and passed within the hangings; the door was shut behind him by the Nazir, who had been standing on the threshold. At the instant a pair of arms were flung around Beejy, who struggled helplessly and in vain; this was not the soft clasp of the Rani's bejewelled arms, but the sinewy grip of a warrior.

To shout for help was useless, even if he had been allowed the opportunity; the gigantic Bhatti chieftain who had been borne to Sanganair in the royal litter, overpowered Beejy Singh, and bound him hand and foot. The crowd in the highways who came out once more to gaze on the procession of the Queen-Mother as it returned to Amber, guessed not that the first litter contained the Bhatti chief and his helpless captive, while, as

before, the three hundred covered chariots held not beautiful handmaids but steel-clad warriors.

Within an hour word was brought to Jey Singh that his brother was safely lodged within the castle of Amber, and he strode again to the council chamber, followed by a few of his men-at-arms. The assembled chiefs stared at him and at each other, and at last inquired, "Where is Beejy Singh?" "In my belly!" flung back Jey Singh, as he boldly confronted them. "We are both sons of Bishen Singh, and I am the elder. If you would rather have him for your lord, slay me, and bring him forth." Then changing his tone, he added, "It is for your sakes that I have forfeited my faith; had Beejy Singh introduced your foes and mine, as assuredly he would have done, all of you must have perished."

The chiefs were in an awkward situation, but they recognised that Jey Singh held the winning cards, and that silence was the better part. They left the hall without further parley, and Jey Singh turned to deal with the only obstacle that now remained in his path.

The six thousand imperial troopers encamped outside Sanganair went to ask what had become of him whom they were commanded to escort. "That is no business of yours," replied Jey Singh, "and you had better strike your camp at once and go back to Delhi, or I shall be obliged to ask you to give up your horses." The escort took the hint, and Beejy Singh was left to his fate, to which the chronicles of the "One Hundred and Nine

Deeds of Jey Singh" (of which this is a sample) give us no clue.[1]

Thus established upon the throne, Jey Singh applied himself to building up the power of Amber, which hitherto had been of little consideration among the Rajput states. Its boundaries were narrow; a goodly part of its western lands had been taken away when first Ajmer fell into the hands of the Moghul. The great Shekhawut confederation, originally a colony from Amber, paying yearly tribute to the parent state, now held aloof and deemed themselves independent. The estates of the "twelve great families" were of small extent, and the heads of the twelve families were little esteemed by the great vassals of other states. Saloombra, the head of the Chondawuts, deemed himself the equal of the Raja of Amber.

Quietly and skilfully Jey Singh began his work. He had no scruples to bind him, no conscience to interfere. Whatever crisis might arise in the neighbouring states, he looked only to his own interests, and thought only of what advantages he might pluck for himself from another's difficulties, were the other Rajput prince or Moghul Emperor. In the great war which desolated Rajast'han during the lifetime of Aurangzib, as in the confusion which followed that Emperor's death, Jey Singh was ever the same, playing fast and loose with either side, calm, wary, and prosperous.

He succeeded, as men of his stamp generally

[1] It is possible that Beejy should be identified with a certain Chumunji, an elder brother whom Jey Singh is said to have murdered.

do succeed, where those who are hampered by honour or tradition go to the wall. Amber rose to the status of a *raj*, and its lord became renowned as one of the greatest princes of Rajast'han.

The story of his intrigues during the great Thirty Years' War is involved with the history of the other Rajput states, and need not be told here. As an example of his methods in dealing with his neighbours, the story of his acquisition of Deoti is worth repeating.

On the borders of Amber was a little independent state called Deoti, the capital of which, Rajore, for many generations had been held by the Birgoojur clan. The Birgoojurs were an offshoot from the same stem as the Cuchwahas, but prided themselves upon being the elder branch, and they steadfastly refused to give their daughters in marriage to the infidel as did the Cuchwahas, who never allowed their pride to stand in the way of their material advancement. The relations between Cuchwahas and Birgoojurs had long been anything but cordial.

The young chieftain of Rajore was away from home, rendering his enforced military service to Delhi, with his band of men-at-arms, and the charge of his wife and his state was committed to his brother, who was a keen huntsman.

It happened that this youth was one day very impatient to go hunting the wild boar, and chafed at the delay in serving his dinner. His sister-in-law lost her temper at his complaints, and said sharply: "You are in such a hurry, any one

would think you were going to throw a lance at Jey Singh."

"By the Lord, I will do so before I eat from your hands again," vowed the hot-headed boy, as he flung out of the room. Followed by only ten horsemen, he clattered through the gates of Rajore and took the road to Amber.

In the course of the next few weeks the townsfolk of Amber grew accustomed to the sight of a stranger who had stationed himself outside their walls. He came fully armed, with horses and attendants, but as the days grew into weeks and the weeks into months, one by one the attendants were dismissed and the horses sold, while still he waited, waited, for something that did not come. Then, piece by piece, he parted with his arms to buy a meal. Nothing was left but his lance, and still he waited by the walls of Amber, growing daily more gaunt and hollow-eyed. At last, when food had not passed his lips for three days, he cut his turban in two, and sold one half of it for bread—and still he waited at his post.

On that day Jey Singh left his castle by a winding road, and as he passed by the corner where the stranger watched, a spear flew between the curtains, and lodged in a corner of the litter. In an instant the guards would have chopped the stranger into a hundred pieces, had not the Maharaja thundered to them not to hurt a hair of his head; the young man was to be secured, and brought before him on his return to Amber.

"And who art thou?" demanded Jey Singh, when the stranger was led into his presence, "and why hast thou done this thing?"

"I am the Deoti Birgoojur," answered the prisoner boldly, "and I threw the spear merely because of some words that passed between me and my brother's wife. Either kill or release me. For many months have I waited for the chance, and had I not been without food for three days, that spear would never have failed to do its work."

Instead of sending the young man to instant execution, Jey Singh spoke kindly to him, ordered him to be released from his bonds, and gave him a robe of honour. He then mounted him on a goodly steed, and sent him back to Rajore with an escort of fifty men.

When the lad had told his adventures, his sister-in-law, who knew that Jey Singh had long desired to pick a quarrel with his neighbour, reproached him sadly. "You have wounded the poisonous serpent," she said, "and you have *given water* to the state of Rajore." But there was no time to waste in lamentation or in upbraidings; the women and children were sent away to the absent Raja, who was then at Anopsheher, on the Ganges, the castles of Deoti and Rajore were garrisoned and provisioned, and the Birgoojurs waited for their doom.

On the third day after dismissing his enemy, Jey Singh convened an assembly of his nobles, recounted his narrow escape from death, and ordered the gage of battle, the *pân*, to be brought

forward. Not one of the council, however, put forth his hand to take it, and Mohun Singh, the chief of the Nat'hawuts, whose sister was the unhappy woman whose hasty speech had caused all the trouble, gave his word against a war with Deoti. The Birgoojur chief, he said, was well esteemed at the Court of Delhi, and was at that moment on active service with his contingent; did it come to the Emperor's ears that Deoti had been attacked during its Raja's absence on duty, Amber might be given cause to repent itself. The other chieftains agreed with him, and in an evil humour Jey Singh dissolved the council.

A month later, he again called them together, and again held out the *pân*. As before, none of the twelve lords would take it. Then up stepped Futteh Singh Bunbeerpota, a petty chieftain, who could muster no more than a hundred and fifty men of his own. Five thousand horse were given to him for the expedition, and he marched out of Amber amid the silent disapproval of all save the Maharaja.

Ever imprudent and heedless of consequences, the Birgoojur chieftain had left Rajore to celebrate some festival, and as he was making merry, some messengers arrived from the Amber commandant. "The compliments of Futteh Singh Bunbeerpota, and he is at hand."

The foolish boy could think of no better way of meeting the crisis than the slaughter of the heralds. Immediately afterwards he and his companions were overtaken and slain by the Amber force.

Rajore was surprised, and the Cuchwaha Rani died by her own hand.

The avenging force cut off the heads of the slain, tied them up in handkerchiefs which they slung from their saddles, and rode back to Amber. Jey Singh demanded to see the head of the Birgoojur chief, which was laid before him. He gazed upon it with an air of satisfaction, but the tears ran down the cheeks of old Mohun Singh, the Nat'hawut, when he looked on the face of the rash boy, whose passionate temper had caused the ruin of a princely house, and the loss of independence to Deoti. Jey Singh turned upon him in wrath, and upbraided him with treason. "Your scruples delayed my vengeance for a month," he said, "and when the lance was levelled at my head, you had no tears to give for me." The old chieftain, who had helped to keep Jey Singh upon his throne, was banished with ignominy from the bounds of Amber, and deprived of his estate of Chomoo. He retired to Udaipur, and lived under the protection of the Rana of Mewar. The luckless ex-Raja of Rajore remained perforce at Anopsheher with the women and children who had succeeded in escaping to him, and in Tod's day his descendants still held lands there.

In this manner did Jey Singh build up his kingdom, and though the means he used were unjustifiable, he proved himself a wise and magnificent prince. He built Jeypore, connecting it with the ancient castle of Amber, that had been reared on a mountain peak. His architect was a Jain, and

it is said that he showed peculiar favour to members of that sect, although Hindus and Muslims alike were certain of his patronage if they had any leanings towards science. As an astronomer Jey Singh had few equals, and it was unfortunate for many of his contemporaries that fate had not made him a poor man with nothing to do but to watch the courses of the stars in one of his own observatories at Delhi, Ujein, Benares, or Jeypore. After making observations for seven years, he constructed a set of tables. Hearing through a Portuguese missionary that there were great astronomers in Portugal, he sent envoys to the court of King Emanuel, and thus acquired the tables of De La Hire. Upon examination and comparison, however, the Rajput found his own tables to be the more accurate, and he attributed the shortcomings of the other set to the inferiority of European instruments. His own instruments were indeed marvellous, and he brought out remarkable results by their means. But he did not despise the learning of the West, despite the deficiencies of their instrument-makers; by his orders, Euclid's Elements, the treatises on plane and spherical trigonometry, and Napier's Logarithms, were translated into Sanskrit. He also collected a valuable library, which was dispersed and squandered by one of his successors.

As a legislator and a ruler he was just, and even benevolent. He erected at his own expense *caravanserais* for the free use of travellers in many of the provinces. He drew up sumptuary laws to

check—amongst other abuses—the extravagant expenses then incurred for weddings, which had caused many Rajput fathers to put their infant girls to death since they could never hope to afford to give them in marriage. He was given to intoxicating drink, which sometimes caused him to act with less than his usual wisdom; but a Rajput constitution can bear excess, and despite his orgies he ruled Amber for four-and-forty years.

In all his dealings with his neighbours he generally contrived to come off victor. The Moghul Emperor gave him the title of "Siwai," which means "one and a quarter," to show that he was more than a match for all his contemporaries, and his descendants have been styled "Siwai" unto this day. On two occasions, however, the great Jey Singh met his master, and in both cases it was a woman.

Jey Singh's sister, married to Boodh Singh, Rao of Boondi, had borne her husband no children. This was a bitter grief to her, and all the more as her sister-Rani, the daughter of a Mewar chieftain, was the mother of two fair sons. At last she could bear her jealousy and disappointment no longer, and while the Rao was obliged to be absent from Boondi, warring with the kindred state of Kotah, the Cuchwaha Rani feigned pregnancy. On Boodh Singh's return she presented him with "a man-child," to whom she declared that she had just given birth.

The Rao was anything but gratified at this

offering; he felt certain that the boy was none of his nor of hers, yet he durst not speak his mind. Just at this time Jey Singh came to visit his brother-in-law, and the perplexed husband made complaint to him in the Rani's presence.

In great displeasure Jey Singh began to put searching questions to his sister, but the lady, seeing her plot fail, was in no mood to be heckled. She overwhelmed the Maharaja with unseemly abuse, called him "the son of a tailor," caught his girdle from his waist, and would have stabbed him on the spot if Jey Singh had not ignominiously turned tail and fled from the room.

The other encounter was with one of his own wives, a princess of Kotah. This Rani had the high spirit and simplicity of the Haras, and while the other royal ladies in Jey Singh's court had adopted the fashions of Delhi and tripped about the palace in very scanty robes, in spite of their laughter and mocking she still wore the wide trailing skirts to which she had been accustomed in her native land. She was alone one day with the Maharaja when he began to scoff at her absurd prejudice in keeping to such a cumbrous, inconvenient style of dress when every one else went lightly clad. She bore it with the silence of a dutiful wife until he took up a pair of scissors, saying that he would cut her skirt to a reasonable size. Then the Hara's indignation blazed forth; she sprang from the cushions and laid hold on his sword. "Beware!" she cried, warding him off. "In the house to which I have the honour to belong, we are

unused to jests of this sort. Mutual respect is the guardian not only of happiness but of honour. Dare thus to insult me again, and I vow to show the world that a daughter of Kotah can swing the sword better than a prince of Amber can wield the scissors."

No apology or submission could calm the Rani's indignation; no future daughter of her race, she declared, should be exposed to such an insult as she had received, and she laid a solemn prohibition upon intermarriage between Amber and Kotah.

In 1743 Siwai Jey Singh was burned with three of his wives. A succession of weak and incompetent princes soon reduced Amber below the level from which he had raised it, and his worthless descendant, Juggut Singh, the profligate suitor of the virgin Princess Kishna, scattered abroad all the treasures that he had amassed. The great hall, with columns and ceilings decked with plates of silver, where Jey Singh had sacrificed a consecrated steed to Surya, the sun-god, was stripped of all its wealth; half the contents of the library were given to a Mahommedan dancing-girl, and priceless MSS. were hawked about the streets of Jeypore by her degraded kin.

NOTE.

The correct spelling would be "Jaipur" and "Jai Singh." But "Jeypore" is the form familiar to English readers, and, therefore, in order to connect the city with its founder,

it had to be "Jey Singh." As has already been said, the spelling throughout this book is the result of a compromise, and makes no claim to accuracy.

Again it is perhaps necessary to accept the Rajput story with reservations. Aurangzib was stern, bigoted, and cruel, but to incite a son to poison his own father seems an incredible feat for "the great Puritan of India." After looking at the Moghul emperors through a Rajput medium, it is a wholesome corrective to turn to Mr. Stanley Lane-Poole ("Mediæval India under Mohammedan Rule," "Babar," "Aurangzib," &c.), and hear what is to be said on the other side.

STORIES OF THE HARAS

THE STORY OF THE LORDS OF THE PASS

IN the heart of Rajast'han lies the tableland known of old as the "Pat'har." It was once a safe retreat for masterless men, and, though nominally under the sway of the Rana of Mewar, it lapsed into anarchy in the troubled times after his capital had been sacked by Ala-ad-din. Everywhere, on the summit of a lofty peak, on the cliff overhanging a torrent, or at the head of some narrow defile among the hills, the ruins of ancient fortresses tell of the days when the armed hand ruled the country-side, and "Lord of the Pass" was no empty title for a Rajput chieftain.

Legend has been busy with these fortresses, each one of which has its traditions. On the western side of the plateau, looking towards Mewar, over wooded valley and plain, stands what is left of Bumaoda — once "the chief of twenty-four castles," but now in ruins. The visitor may trace the outline of the outer and inner fort, of three temples, and of a hall. Below, on a rocky ledge, a gigantic statue of the tutelary goddess of the Haras, "Bhavani Mata," guards the ascent.

Bumaoda was built, probably about the begin-

ning of the fourteenth century, by a chieftain of the Haras, a branch of the Chohan tribe. The Chohans were one of the greatest of the "thirty-six royal races" of India, and the Haras have ever been accounted one of the finest of the Rajput clans. In courage, resourcefulness, loyalty, and daring they had no superiors, and might be taken as types of all that was best in the Rajput character. The women are noted for their spirit and vigour; when the wife of a Rajput chieftain is found playing a conspicuous part in the history of her time, she generally proves to have been a Hara.

The first lord of Bumaoda ruled over the Pat'har, founded cities, raised fortresses, and left twelve strong sons behind him to carry on his work. One of these, Rao Dewa, succeeded him as "King of the Pat'har," and by his energy and warlike spirit soon made himself dreaded by all his neighbours. His fame reached even to Delhi, where the Pathan emperor heard with displeasure that another strong Rajput kingdom was rising out of the fragments of Mewar. Ere long, Rao Dewa found himself invited to visit the imperial court. The Rao durst not refuse, although he knew well that he had small chance of returning home in safety. He left Bumaoda in charge of his son, and, with the rest of his family, set forth to Delhi.

Now Rao Dewa was the owner of a wondrous steed, whose like was not in the Emperor's stables. Its sire had been a horse belonging to the Rana of Mewar, "that could cross a stream without wetting

his hoof,"—its mother, a mare of the Pat'har. No sooner had the Emperor beheld this horse than he coveted it for himself. Neither hints nor threats could prevail upon Rao Dewa to give it up, so, forgetting or caring nothing that the Rajput had eaten of his bread and salt, the Emperor determined to take his life. Rao Dewa guessed his danger, and secretly sent away one member of his family after another, until he alone was left behind in Delhi.

The Emperor was on the balcony of one of his palaces, when he saw a horseman, fully armed, ride below. It was Rao Dewa, the Hara, mounted on his steed. "Farewell, sire," called the chieftain, waving his lance in salutation, "there are three things none may ever ask of a Rajput—his sword, his mistress, and his horse." With these words, he urged the horse to its utmost speed, and in an instant was out of sight. Vain was it to pursue him; not the fleetest steeds of the Pathans could hope to overtake Rao Dewa's horse.

Dewa rode on in safety until he reached the Pat'har, where he found his son garrisoning Bumaoda. Bidding him remain where he was, he went eastwards to the valley of the Bangunga, where now stands the town of Boondi. Here he found the whole country-side living in terror of a robber chief, Rao Gango, who had built himself a stronghold at Ramgur'h among the eastern hills beyond the river Chumbul, whence he descended to levy blackmail alike upon the Meenas and the Rajputs. Even in the valley, although they had

erected a strong barrier to close either end, they were not safe from his exactions. Every second month, on the night of the full moon, Rao Gango would ride up to the barrier, and if a bag containing tribute were not thrown over to him, woe betide the dwellers in the valley!

Rao Dewa heard the story, and was wroth that any should presume to harry the country-side but himself. The next full moon came, and Gango rode towards the barrier, lance in rest; but no tribute was ready for him.

"Who has been before me?" he cried; and as the words passed his lips, forth rode Rao Dewa, armed for the fray.

Seldom had there been such an encounter; in courage, in prowess, the champions were well matched, and although Rao Dewa rode the horse he had risked his life to keep, Rao Gango's steed was almost its peer. Born from "a river-horse of the Par," it had carried its master in all his forays, and it was to do him good service once more on this fateful night. After a sharp struggle, Gango felt himself worsted, and turned to flee; Dewa thundered after him. Eastwards towards Ramgur'h the robber chieftain led the way until he reached the cliffs overhanging the Chumbul. "Now," thought Dewa, "he must needs halt, and meet me hand to hand," but at that instant Gango set his steed at the edge of the cliff, and man and horse fell together into the foaming torrent below. Rao Dewa deemed that his foe had sought death in the waters rather than defeat at his hands.

Grieving at the fate of so gallant an enemy, he stayed his horse on the brow of the cliff, and looked down into the roaring flood. As he gazed he saw Gango's crest appear above the surface, and in a few moments man and horse had gained the opposite bank, unhurt. "Bravely done, Rajput!" cried Dewa. "Tell me thy name."

"I am Rao Gango," answered the dripping chieftain, as he shook the water from himself. "And thine?"

"I am Rao Dewa the Hara. Henceforth let us be brothers, not enemies. This river shall be the boundary between us."

In this way did Rao Dewa and his clan become allied with the clan of Rao Gango; and the valley being no longer harried by marauders, Rao Dewa founded there the city of Boondi, where he dwelt and prospered.

Bamaoda passed from his son to his grandson; and of this grandson, Aloo Hara, many stories are still told. Like all true Rajputs he was the soul of bravery and the soul of pride; when once he had passed his word, neither the fear of death nor the hope of any reward could move him to swerve from it in the least degree.

It befell, one day, that Aloo Hara was returning from hunting, when he met a Charun (a bard), who gave him a blessing. Custom demanded that something should be given in return, and Aloo asked what it might be. To all his offers of rich raiment, cattle, or gold, the bard returned that he would have nothing but the turban from the chief's

own head—and when Aloo demurred at granting such a strange request, the Charun threatened him with a curse if he refused. Brave as he was, Aloo Hara dared not face this risk ; he gave up the turban to the bard, who placed it on his own head and went his way.

Some time later, Aloo Hara was sitting within his hall at Bumaoda, when a suppliant burst into his presence. It was the Charun, travel-stained, with disordered dress, holding the turban under his arm, and loudly demanding vengeance upon the Raja of Marwar.

His story was that after parting with Aloo Hara, he had journeyed to Mundore, the chief city of Marwar, and entered the royal audience hall. As he salaamed before the throne, the Raja asked what he meant by removing his turban with his right hand, while he made the usual salutations with his left. "This is the turban of Aloo Hara," returned the Charun, "and the turban of Aloo Hara shall bow to no man on earth." Whereat the Raja, not unnaturally, had replied by kicking the turban out of his hand, and the Charun had at once hurried to Bumaoda to seek revenge for the insult.

When Aloo Hara heard all this, he upbraided the Charun bitterly. "You would have neither gold nor lands, nor cattle when they were offered to you, and now you will cause me to lose my life for this worthless rag."

But the insult was not one to be stomached in quietness, and so thought the five hundred men

of his clan, whom a hasty summons brought to Bumaoda. The Raja of Marwar should be taught a lesson, although none of those who were to teach it hoped to return to their mountain home afterwards. They prepared themselves with solemn rites, as was ever the wont of Rajputs when they were resolved to perish in battle, and, taking a last farewell of wives and children, marched down the pass beneath the statue of the goddess. The only member of the clan of any importance who was left behind was Aloo Hara's young nephew, the heir of Bumaoda, and he was locked up by his uncle in an inner room enclosed by seven doors, lest their house should be destroyed, root and branch.

The Raja of Marwar had been warned that he was likely to hear more of Aloo Hara, but he laughed the thought to scorn. "A petty border chieftain dare to face the King of the Desert?[1] I vow to the Brahmins all of my lands on which he ventures to set his foot." He was sleeping peacefully one night when he was roused by a terrific din—the rattle of war-drums and the bray of the long Rajput war-horns—and started up, crying, "Who dares knock so loud at the gates of Mundore?" The answer came, "Aloo Hara of Bumaoda." The border chieftain and his men had made their way into the city disguised as horse merchants, and were now ready to wipe out in blood the insult to the turban.

At this crisis the Raja of Marwar showed that

[1] This is one of the titles of the ruler of Marwar.

he, too, was of Rajput blood. Unruffled by the taunts of his mother—who asked if he still intended to give the Brahmins the land over which Aloo Hara had passed—the fury of his own people, and the defiances of the Haras, and scorning to take advantage of his superior strength to crush the devoted band, he offered to choose five hundred of his men to meet the five hundred Haras in single combat.

The offer was accepted, the lists were dressed, and crowds assembled to watch the fight. The combatants were awaiting the signal to begin, when into their midst dashed a single horseman. The sides of the steed were heaving from a long journey at break-neck speed, and the rider was little more than a boy. Bending before the Raja, he demanded to be chosen as the first champion on the side of the Haras. The Raja's men looked on him with surprise, wondering whence the youth came, but the Haras were struck dumb—for this was he whom they had left behind seven locks in the fortress of Bumaoda. At last his uncle gathered voice to speak. "O headstrong and disobedient! art thou come to extinguish the race of Aloo Hara?"

"Let it perish, uncle, if when you are in peril I am not with you," answered the boy.

As he made himself ready for the fight, a murmur ran round the clan that he was under the protection of their goddess. While he had chafed in his imprisonment, eating out his heart in rage and grief at being left in safety while his

kin were in jeopardy of their lives, lo! the bars drew back of their own accord, the seven doors flew open, and Bhavani Mata herself stood before him. From her rocky ledge she had heard his lamentations, and she armed him and sent him to his uncle's side, to win fresh glory for his clan.

The first adversary who came from the ranks of Marwar was a tried warrior, who, admiring the youth's spirit, left it to him to strike the first blow. For some time, with equal courtesy, the Hara waited for the other to begin; but at last he raised his sword, and at a single stroke the veteran fell at his feet, cloven in twain.

One by one the champions of Marwar shared the same fate. Who could stand before the youth, whispered the Haras, when the goddess had passed her hands over him, making him invulnerable? But, as always happens in such cases, there was one part which Bhavani had forgotten to touch, and a blow on his neck laid the boy dead before the eyes of his clan.

Loud shouted the Haras, and one and all would have died there to avenge him, if the Queen-Mother of Marwar had not pleaded with her son to stay the fight. 'Twas pity, said she, that such a brave stock should be destroyed. Enough vengeance had been taken for the insult to the turban; let the Raja give a daughter of his royal house in marriage to Aloo Hara, and she should bear strong sons to take the place of him who had met a glorious death.

All were well pleased at the Queen-Mother's

words; Aloo Hara was then and there married to the princess, and returned with her to Bumaoda amid great rejoicings.

Their only child was a daughter, but Aloo Hara hoped that her sons might prove worthy of his race, and as soon as she was old enough to be married, he chose a husband for her. The marriage was to take place with great pomp and ceremony; and Aloo Hara himself went to the temple to invite the goddess to the feast. All was ready, the guests were assembling, and the usual crowd of beggars thronged outside the hall to receive their share. Among them was a wrinkled old crone who pressed herself into the foremost rank, and in shrill tones ordered the guard at the door to tell Aloo Hara that she would speak with him.

"Aye, wouldst thou?" answered the guard mockingly. "Thou art not in wedding trim, old woman, and Aloo Hara has more to do than to listen to thy prate. Get thee gone, and stand not between me and the wind."

"Aloo Hara himself bade me to the wedding-feast," insisted the old woman; but the guards grew angry, and drove her from the door by force.

The old woman made no resistance, but as she turned away she raised her hand and uttered a curse upon Aloo Hara, who, after inviting her to his daughter's marriage, had suffered her to be mocked by his guards. Then she disappeared, and no man saw her again. It was "the Mother"

herself whom Aloo Hara's men had cast out from his door. Thus it was that Aloo Hara died the last of his house.

But the valour of the clan did not die with him, even in the fatal years that came long afterwards, when brother turned against brother, and Rajputs brought Rajast'han to a depth of humiliation which she had never known under the heel of Babar or Aurangzib. In those days of shame a Hara, Goman Singh, was "Lord of the Pass," a defile in the mountain barrier dividing Malwa from Kotah, the southern portion of the land of the Haras. His overlord was the Raja of Kotah, who was descended from a cadet branch of the royal house of Boondi.

A rival poisoned the Raja's mind against Goman Singh, who was one day summoned to court to be told that his estate was forfeited, and his right to keep the pass taken from him. Sullenly the chief rode down to the city gates on his homeward journey. Amid the darkness of night he saw a palanquin coming towards him, preceded by a torchbearer and followed by a long train of servants, and knew that his enemy reclined within it. It was the work of a few minutes to throw down the torchbearer and to pin the traitor to his seat with the long iron lance that Goman Singh was bearing. Then, in the midst of the outcries and confusion as the servants tumbled over each other in the dark, the vengeful chieftain rode on quietly to the gates, and told the warders that it was the

Raja's orders that they should be closed behind him and not opened again till morning. Riding hard, he reached his castle among the mountains, collected his household and his gear, and ere the Kotah Raja could lay hand upon him, he and his were under the protection of the Rana of Mewar.

The Rana received him kindly, and gave him an estate on which he lived for some time, nursing his griefs. Then came the news to Mewar that the Raja of Amber had resolved on the destruction of Kotah, and was besieging the chief town. Old impulses stirred within Goman Singh, old memories were too strong for his sense of injury. He asked and obtained the Rana's leave to go to the help of his old master, gathered a band of followers, and hurried across country by forced marches—only to find that the troops of Amber had surrounded the town of Kotah so closely that there was no chance of his reaching it unobserved.

Forthwith he ordered his war-drums to be sounded, and marched straight through the enemy's camp, past the tent of the Raja of Amber, who sent to ask who dared to smite a drum within his hearing. "Goman Singh from Mewar," answered the chief, "and we go to the help of Kotah." "If Goman Singh is indeed there," said the Raja, "let him be brought before me with all honour, for I would fain see the man who unarmed once slew a tiger, as my father has told me."

Goman Singh refused to be separated from his followers, and all were brought before the Raja, who began to make large offers to the chief, in the hope of inducing him to cast in his lot with Amber. The Raja of Kotah had disgraced him; there was no shame in breaking his allegiance to one who had treated him so scurvily. Moreover, why should he throw away his life, since the fate of the town was sealed? Taking up the *pân*, the Raja added, "In as little time as it takes to chew this *pân*, I shall be master of Kotah." Then Goman Singh's wrath blazed forth. "Take my salaam and my defiance, Maharaj!" he cried, "the heads of twenty thousand Haras are with Kotah."

Rajput chivalry was not dead in Amber, although it had been sorely besmirched, and the chief and his followers were allowed to go on their way in peace through the batteries of the besiegers.

Behind the walls of Kotah sat the Raja, overlooking the defences, when a hail came from the opposite bank of the river that runs past the town. "A boat, here! ho, send a boat for the 'Lord of the Pass.'" A few moments later, and the man whom he had ruined and exiled was bending before him. There was small time for thanks or for regrets. As the Raja greeted his faithful servant, messengers hurried to say that the enemy were making a breach in the defences. One last salaam to his lord, and Goman Singh led his followers to the breach. So long as it

was possible, they kept back the foe; and when at length the tide rolled in through the gap to overwhelm Kotah in ruin, Goman Singh and every man of his band lay dead about the broken walls. Of such spirit were the men who by hereditary right once guarded the mountain passes of the "land of princes."

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THE SUTTEE'S CURSE

It befell once on a time that the Rana of Mewar's workmen were draining the lake of Chitor when they discovered, hidden in the bed of the lake, a wondrous image of the four-armed god. One arm pointed upwards to heaven, one downwards to the earth, and one was extended straight before him. The Rana summoned all his wise men, all his Charuns or bards, to declare why the arms pointed thus, but not one of them could interpret the meaning. Then the Rana was wroth, and commanded that all Charuns should be banished from his dominions.

Some time afterwards a Charun appeared at Chitor, and boldly declared that he knew the signification of the image. When he was brought before the Rana, "Behold!" he cried, "one arm points upwards to show that there is one lord of Heaven, and that is Indra; and one arm points downwards to show that there is one lord of Hell; and one arm points straight before the god to show that there is one lord of Mewar, which is between Heaven and Hell, and that is the Rana."

All acclaimed this interpretation, and the Rana would have filled the Charun's mouth with sugar-candy, and heaped rich gifts upon him. But he

refused them all, saying that he was under a vow to take no presents from any man; all he asked was that the Rana would revoke his decree, and recall the bards to Mewar. This was granted, and the Charun lived at the Rana's court in close friendship with the Rana's heir.

Now the prince was one day returning to his father's palace when he met an aged priest who walked with dejected mien, and bore the cocoa-nut that with the Rajputs has ever been the symbol of an offer of marriage. "What dost thou here, my father?" asked the prince, 'and wherefore is thy face so sad?" "I come from Boondi," answered the priest, "and I was sent by Lallaji, the Hara chieftain, who dwells in one of its castles, to offer his daughter in marriage to the Rana. But the Rana will have none of Lallaji's daughter, and I return homeward shamed and slighted." "Nay," said the prince, with a sudden impulse, "since my father cares not to take another wife, I myself will wed the Hara's daughter. 'Tis pity that an affront should be put upon a brave man; therefore go home and tell thy chieftain that the son of the Rana of Mewar will come in due time to Boondi to carry home the bride."

When the Hara heard the prince's message he was overcome with joy, and made great preparations for the wedding, which was to take place in the fortress of Bumaoda, the chief of the four-and-twenty castles of the Pat'har. At the appointed day the Mewar prince reached the castle, and with him came his friend the Charun.

All was revelry and merriment, and Lallaji, proud to have married his daughter so honourably, lavished costly presents upon all the bards who had flocked to the marriage feast. To the prince's friend he made the richest offerings—a horse with gorgeous trappings, robes of honour, and a great bag of money. The Charun at first refused them; but as he saw their great value he forgot his vow, and with many protests he allowed them to be left with him.

The ceremony had begun, and the moment was reached when the hands of bridegroom and bride are joined. Suddenly a terrible cry broke upon the ears of the guests—"The Charun, the holy bard of Mewar, is slain!" Unable to bear the thought of his broken vow the Charun had stabbed himself. Forgetful of all else the prince let fall the bride's hand, and sprang forward calling for vengeance.

Then followed a scene of hubbub and confusion; while the prince still cried against all who had brought about the death of his friend, the Haras were beside themselves with indignation at the dire affront he had put upon his bride and upon her clan in leaving her side at such a moment. In the end the men of Mewar and their prince were thrust outside the doors of Bumaoda, and the bridal was left uncompleted.

When next the men of Bumaoda saw the prince he was knocking at their gates with an armed force from Mewar. But the castle was strong, and from its position almost impregnable, and the

prince might have continued to camp in the land of the Haras with little serious harm to either side, and only as much skirmishing as was necessary to content a Rajput, but for the approach of the spring hunting season. Custom and religion ordained that ere the spring hunt began a boar should be sacrificed to Gouri. Lallaji and his men descended into the plains, and while they hunted the boar they were surprised by the men of Mewar. Either side fought desperately, and when the day was ended and they gathered their dead, each had lost its leader.

Within the gates of Bumaoda two pyres were raised; on one in silent grief reclined the widow of Lallaji, her husband's head in her lap; on the other was the daughter of Lallaji, with the dead body of her bridegroom. As the flames arose about the girl, a widow ere she was wife, those who pressed round hoping to receive a suttee's blessing, heard her last words: "Woe! woe! to the day when Mewar and Boondi shall be together at the spring hunt! Never shall Rana and Rao meet there, but death shall follow."

Not long afterwards the curse was fulfilled for the first time. The reigning Rana of Mewar was attempting to bring to order his outlying dominions, which had been desolated by a Pathan invasion, and called upon the Rao of Boondi to do him homage. The Rao not only refused, but, with a body of five hundred men who had put on the saffron robe in token that they would fight unto the death, fell upon the camp of Mewar, cut the

sleeping troops to pieces, and forced the Rana to fly for his life.

In a transport of rage the Rana swore that he would not eat again until he had taken the city of Boondi. Gathering his troops he prepared to march against the town, which was sixty miles distant, and well garrisoned. His chieftains pointed out that he was likely to die of hunger long ere Boondi could fall, but the Rana was obstinate; he had vowed a vow, and he would keep it.

Then one of his nobles suggested: "To save the Rana's life and honour, let us make another Boondi here, beneath the walls of Chitor. We will build it of mud, and make it the counterpart of the real Boondi."

The Rana, whose warlike enthusiasm was lessening as his hunger grew, approved of this, and another Boondi soon sprang up without the walls of Chitor. As soon as it was finished, the Rana and his nobles sallied forth to take it by storm; but when they drew near, a volley of bullets whistled about their ears.

There was a Hara chieftain in the Rana's pay who had gone forth with his men some days before to hunt the deer. As he was returning to Chitor, he saw a crowd outside the gates, and asked what had gathered it. On being told that the Rana was storming Boondi, to be absolved of his vow, he gathered his band together, and one and all swore that their city should never be dishonoured, even in name. They spread a sheet before the mud gates and there fell sword in hand, as brave in

the defence of the mock city as they would have been in the defence of the real Boondi. Respecting their keen sense of honour, the Rana interfered no more with their Rao, and Mewar and Boondi were once more on friendly terms.

Years rolled by, and Mewar and Boondi were bound together by marriage and by other ties, and no one remembered the suttee's curse.

In the days when Rana Rutna was lord of Mewar his queen was Sooja Bhai, sister of Soorajmul, Rao of Boondi, who, in his turn, had wedded the Rana's sister.

Soorajmul, the son of a heroic prince, had inherited one weakness from his father together with the strength, activity, and fearlessness which had made that father's name a by-word; he took opium in quantities that were immoderate even for a Rajput. Heedless of time or place when the craving for the drug was upon him, he once fell asleep in the audience hall of the Rana of Mewar, in the midst of the assembly of nobles. Unluckily for many besides himself, a chieftain thought it a rare jest to tickle Soorajmul's ear with a straw as he lay snoring on the carpet.

Small time was there for the jester or the rest of the company to laugh at the sport; in an instant the Rao was awake and on his feet, glaring about him with eyes reddened by the large dose of opium he had swallowed. A single stroke of his sword, and the thoughtless noble's head was swept from his shoulders, while the smile faded from the lips of the assembly.

The Rana was grievously affronted, first that an inferior should have dared to sleep in his presence, and then that one of his nobles should have been slain before his eyes. His wrath was fanned by the dead man's son, who strove unceasingly to instil suspicions of the Rao into his mind. Was it only brotherly love for Sooja Bhai, he whispered, that brought Rao Soorajmul so often to Mewar? The thought worked in the Rana's mind, and he began to hate his brother-in-law, against whom he had long borne a secret grudge, Soorajmul having, all unwittingly, carried off a bride betrothed to the Rana.[1]

Sooja Bhai was a high-spirited dame, passionately fond of her brother, and like most Rajput wives, far more zealous for the honour of the house into which she was born, than for that of the house into which she had married. One day she made a feast, to which she invited her husband and her brother; all the dishes had been cooked by herself, and while the two guests sat at her table she stood by with a whisk to drive away the flies. Soorajmul was hungry and ate heartily of all that his sister placed before him; but the Rana, whether from ill-health or ill-temper, ate little. Sooja Bhai was nettled at this slight to her cookery, and as she bore away the dishes, she spoke tauntingly: "The Rao has eaten his food like a tiger; the Rana has toyed with his food like a child."

Black wrath swelled in the Rana's heart, and from that hour he was resolved to be avenged on

[1] See "The Second Sack of Chitor."

his brother-in-law; yet he spoke to him with flattering words, and dismissed him honourably, telling him that when the time of the spring hunting came, they would kill a boar together in the Boondi land.

Soorajmul was well pleased to hear this, and when the hunting season began, he made ready to drive the game on the cliffs of Nandta by the western bank of the Chumbul river. The Rana was there with all his train, and gay was the talk and laughter as each noble took his allotted post and waited for the quarry to pass. In the two chief places were the Rana and Rao, next to each other, and with the Rana were his foster-brother and the son of the man whom Soorajmul had killed.

As Soorajmul stood watching for the moment when some great boar with long tushes and wicked eyes should break from the covert and perchance attack the huntsmen, a hiss in the air made him turn his head, and he saw that the Rana had sent an arrow towards him. He warded it with his bow, and turned to remonstrate, thinking that his brother-in-law had aimed carelessly at some wild beast. But as he would have spoken, he saw the Rana's foster-brother fitting another arrow to his bow, and he had scarce time to avoid it ere the Rana was upon him, and had cut him down with a blow from his sword.

Help was far away, and moreover his father's son could not call for aid like a woman. Sorely wounded, Soorajmul tried to staunch the flow of

blood with the shawl that he wore twisted about him, while the cowardly Rana, thinking him as good as dead, turned to ride away. "Escape as you may, you have lost Mewar," called the dying man from the ground where he lay. "Would you leave the work half done?" urged the son of the dead Mewar chieftain, who had been watching for other sport than the slaughter of boar or deer. Goaded by these taunts, the Rana turned again and rode back to his enemy. He had forgotten that Soorajmul's arms, which, like those of many heroes of Rajput legend, hung below his knees, could reach farther than those of another man. One clutch, one sudden jerk from those sinewy arms, and the Rana was torn from his horse; over and over the two rolled, locked in a death grip, but Soorajmul gained the mastery. Pressing his knee against the Rana's breast, he drew the dagger from his girdle; one good thrust, with the last flicker of strength of a dying man, and the steel had pierced to the Rana's false heart. The hunt broke up in dismay and terror, and while the biers were made for the princes, messengers were sent to Chitor and to the city of Boondi to tell the women behind the curtains what had befallen their masters. When the news came to the old Rani, Soorajmul's mother, she uttered no cry and shed no tear. "The Rao is dead, forsooth; but did he die alone? Surely no son that I have held at these breasts would go from life unattended." Men say that, as she spake these words, pride and suppressed grief battled

within her so strongly for the mastery that once more her withered breast was swollen, and milk dropped from it, and where the milk fell upon the flooring of the palace, the marble slab was cracked asunder.

Sooja Bhai paid for her taunt in the flames that burned her husband's corpse, and in like manner the Rana's sister lay down to die beside Soorajmul. Thus ended another fatal hunting.

Again years passed, and much befell both Mewar and Boondi. The end of the eighteenth century was drawing near, and to both Rana and Rao their danger from Sindhia, the leader of the Mahratta hordes that were tearing Babar's empire to pieces, seemed far more pressing than the danger predicted by some old wives' fable. On the throne of Mewar sat Rana Ursi, a stern and haughty man. It was rumoured that he had opened his way to sovereignty by removing the rightful heir, his young nephew, and his arrogance made him detested by his nobles. The lord of Boondi was a youth, Ajit, whose wise and courageous father, the great Rao Omeda, had abdicated in his favour.

On the "debatable land," where Mewar and Boondi met, was a hamlet called Bilaita. In itself it was of no value or importance—"scarce could it grow a few worthless mangoes"—but near it dwelt a band of freebooters who ravaged the Boondi side, and on that account the Rao fortified Bilaita and placed a garrison there to check their forays. Mischief-makers at once complained to

the Rana that Rao Ajit was trespassing upon his land, and the Rana sent a peremptory message demanding that Bilaita should be given up to him.

A meeting was arranged between Rao and Rana, and while the younger man was impressed by Ursi's dignity and graciousness, Ursi was won by Ajit's fire and spirit. They agreed to say no more of Bilaita, and parted as excellent friends, the Rao inviting the Rana to come to the spring hunt on the lands of Boondi. Rana Ursi gladly accepted the invitation, for he knew that every kind of game was to be found among the hills of the Pat'har, from the tiger and the great deer[1] to the wild dog and the antelope, and the meeting-place was once more to be the fatal cliffs of Nandta.

When the season came, the chiefs did not go to the hunt unwarned. The former ruler of Boondi, Omeda, now a pilgrim from shrine to shrine, sent to remind his son of the Suttee's curse, but Ajit scornfully returned answer that he could not break tryst for such a foolish excuse. The Rana's wife, whose sister was married to Ajit, had forebodings of evil, and strove to detain her husband, but he was "fey."

The nobles of Mewar followed the Rana to the hunt, and his chief minister gave a feast, at which Rana and Rao were present with their trains. All went merrily, and Ajit had retired to his tent, so that his hand should be steady and his eye clear

[1] *Bara-singh.*

on the morrow, when he was disturbed by a visitor who stole upon him at dead of night. It was the chief minister of Mewar, who, with much show of reluctance and many excuses, declared that he had been sent by Rana Ursi to demand the instant surrender of Bilaita—and this in terms so foully insulting that no Rajput could have brooked to hear them.

The Rana had sent no such message, but the minister and the chieftains were weary of Ursi's rule, and hoped to rid themselves of him by picking a quarrel in his name with Ajit. When the minister crept back to his tent, he knew that his purpose would soon be fulfilled.

On the morrow, Rana and Rao went forth to hunt. Remembering a former day by the banks of the Chumbul, Ajit brooded over his wrongs, and longed to slay the Rana where he stood, but he lacked either the resolution or the opportunity. At the end of the day the Rana, unhurt and smiling, dismissed Ajit with many thanks for the sport and assurances of friendship. Ajit turned, hesitated, and turned again. "Ye have my leave to depart," repeated Ursi, thinking that the youth had not understood his words, "it will not be long ere our next meeting." Again Ajit bowed and turned away; and then with a sudden access of fury rushed upon Ursi and drove his lance through the Rana and his horse.

All passed in a moment. "O Hara, what hast thou done?" murmured the dying man, as Ajit's sword was raised to give a last blow. Only a

mace-bearer sprang forward to protect or avenge his lord; all the nobles of Mewar fled, right and left, as if seized by a supernatural fear, and untouched the Rao bore away the golden disk of the sun, the royal device of Mewar.

The camp lay deserted, the body of the Rana lay unwatched, untended, to be the prey of the beasts whom he had hunted on that morning. Of all the train whom he had brought to Boondi, only one person remained faithful to him in death. It was a woman, his toy, his favourite, but not his wife, who came back to his side, and found some to raise a funeral pyre at her bidding. The logs were piled beneath a tree, and the corpse was laid upon them; the woman climbed to her place, and as the torches were put to the wood, she raised the dead man in her arms. "O spreading tree above my head," she cried, "hear my words and give a sign in answer! If this man was slain in revenge for the old blood feud, let his slayer go free and unhurt! but if he was slain by foul treachery for another cause, let the slayer become a world's wonder ere two months have passed over him." A large bough dropped from the tree, and the woman lay down by her lord, knowing that her prayer was heard.

In two months Rao Ajit was stricken by some foul disease, and the flesh dropped piecemeal from his bones until he died. A child was Rana, a child was Rao, and woe upon woe came to Mewar and Boondi. Thus for the third time was the Suttee's curse fulfilled.

STORIES OF JESSULMER

SOME PRINCES OF JESSULMER

JESSULMER is a little state, lying to the north of Marwar—in reality a small oasis in the great "Indian desert." The chief Rajput tribe there is that of the Bhattis, who trace their descent from Chandra, the moon, while most of the other royal tribes of Rajast'han are "sun-born."

The early rulers of Jessulmer bore the title of Rao, and spent most of their time pleasantly enough in leading the Bhattis against various hostile tribes of dubious nationality who took their names from some animal. Of the "Snakes" (Takshacs) we hear more in Mewar, where they are said originally to have founded Chitor; those with whom the Bhattis had most to do were the "Hogs" or "Barahas."

At the end of the eighth century there were great wars in Jessulmer. Rao Tunno had gained victories over the Barahas, who then allied themselves with a motley host from the north—the Prince of Multan with Pathans, Moghuls, hillmen and others. They camped round the castle of Rao Tunno, and laid siege to it for four days. On the fifth day, the gates of the castle were thrown open, and down into the midst of the besiegers rushed Tunno, followed by his son,

Beeji Rae, and the bravest of the Bhattis. Neither Pathan nor Baraha could stand against a Rajput charge; the allies fled in headlong rout, and Rao Tunno's men bore away the spoil.

After this, Tunno was left in peace by his neighbours. He was protected by the tutelary goddess of his race, Beejasenni, who showed him a hidden treasure, and he placed her statue in the fortress which he built and called Beejnote. After a reign of eighty years he died, leaving the throne to Beeji Rae, who had married a Boota princess of Bootaban.

Beeji Rae began his reign well. He defeated the Barahas continually, until they grew weary and sued for peace. Let Deoraj, the son of Beeji Rae, marry the daughter of their chief, they said, and henceforth Bhattis and Barahas should be one people.

Nothing doubting, Beeji Rae accepted the offer, and set forth with his son and his clansmen to the wedding-feast. It proved a fatal banquet. When the guests were all at their ease, their weapons laid aside, and everything forgotten but the enjoyment of the hour, the "Hogs," who had been waiting their opportunity, fell upon them. Beeji Rae and eight hundred of his house and clan never went home from the wedding. Then the Barahas marched to Tunnote, at that time the chief city of Jessulmer, which of course had been left with few to defend it. Nearly every living creature within its walls was slaughtered by the Barahas, who then returned to their own district,

thinking that the very name of Bhatti had perished from the earth.

They did not know that in their very midst there dwelt the dead man's son, Deoraj, the bridegroom whose wedding-day had been disastrous to all his clan. Amidst the confusion of the massacre he had fled away, and taken refuge in the house of a *jogi*.[1] Scarcely had he explained who he was when there came thunderings and beatings at the door; the Barahas had seen a boy running from the feast, and tracked him to the *jogi's* dwelling.

The *jogi* was the family priest of the Baraha chief, but he was resolved not to give up the fugitive. Hastily he threw round the boy's neck the sacred cotton thread which none but a Brahmin may wear, and set food before him. When the pursuers burst in, they saw only the *jogi* sitting beside a young disciple and eating from the same dish with him, and were soon assured that they must look elsewhere for their prey.

For some time Deoraj lived in the house of the holy man and passed for his disciple. But he was too restless to remain long hidden, and he yearned to find out whether his mother or any of his kin had escaped the slaughter at Tunnote.

The old *jogi* was in the habit of going away by himself, leaving Deoraj alone in the house. One day, when the young prince had thus been left to his own devices, he was roaming idly through the rooms, when he picked up a tattered garment that

[1] *Jogi* = holy man, religious ascetic.

the *jogi* sometimes wore. Out of it fell a small vessel full of a very strange-looking liquid. From curiosity, Deoraj let a drop of this liquid fall upon his dagger, and great was his amazement when the sharp edge became soft and blunt, and the grey gleam of the steel turned to yellow. Then he knew that the *jogi* was one of those greatly favoured by the gods, who possess the magic elixir that turns all metal to gold.

With no thought of the shame of robbing a holy man, who, moreover, had saved his life, Deoraj concealed the dagger and the vessel in his clothing, and set off at once for Boota, where dwelt his mother's kin.

There he found his mother herself, who, by some fortunate chance, had not been murdered with all her husband's family at Tunnote. She recognised her son at once, and gave him her blessing, first waving salt over his head to take away evil, then flinging it into water, with the words, "Thus may thy foes melt away." The Boota chief, her brother, under whose protection she was living, was not so well pleased to see his nephew, foreboding that the young man would bring trouble and strife.

Deoraj's first proceeding was to ask his uncle for the grant of a village; very reluctantly did the chief consent, and sorely did he rue it when he was assailed by all his own kinsmen. "Give that reckless boy a village? As soon as he can gather ten lances about him, he will be raiding and harrying all our neighbours, who will make

reprisals on us." So the village was taken away from Deoraj, who vainly importuned the chief for a little land whereon he might build a dwelling-place. At last, worn out by his pertinacity, the Boota granted him as much ground as could be covered by a single oxhide.

Whether the story of the Phœnician queen had then reached as far as the Indian desert, it is impossible to say; the builder to whom Deoraj applied in his perplexity was ready with the device that had been successfully practised by Dido at Carthage, by Ivar Ragnarsson in Northumbria, and other colonists. He cut an oxhide into long thin strips, with which he encircled a tract of land. The Boota chief did not trouble himself; the site of Deoraj's dwelling was in the midst of the desert, and the young man, having no money wherewith to pay workmen, could do little in the way of building.

But Deoraj had with him the magic elixir that he had stolen from the *jogi*, a few drops of which enabled him to hire as many labourers as he needed. In a short time news was brought to the Boota chief that his nephew had reared a strong fortress, and he set forth with his clansmen to chastise the insolent young man, and to pull down the castle.

At the gates, instead of being greeted with a volley of arrows or a shower of stones, they were received by the mother of Deoraj, who bore the keys of the castle, and an apology from her son. Far be it from him, she said, to rebel against his

benefactors, who had sheltered him in the time of trouble; his castle was theirs, and his head also, let them come in, and receive his homage. On one pretext or another, the Boota chiefs were only admitted in parties of ten at a time; as they entered, they were cut down by Deoraj and his men, beheaded, and their bodies thrown over the wall. When all the leaders, to the number of a hundred and twenty, had been thus disposed of, the rank and file took to flight.

Deoraj's next visitor was more alarming than all the forces of the Bootas, being none other than the holy man whom he had robbed. But the *jogi* came not to upbraid or to punish the chief who was to restore the fortresses of Jessulmer. He knew that Deoraj had taken the elixir, and he freely forgave him if the young man would become his disciple. Deoraj assented, glad to escape so easily, and the holy man stripped him of his dress and hung about him the yellow robe; his weapons were taken away, and a gourd, such as that which beggars carry, was placed in his hand. He wandered meekly from door to door, crying the name of the One God, until the *jogi* recalled him, hailed him by the title of "Rawul" instead of "Rao," made the *teeka* on his brow, filled the gourd with gold and pearls, and bade him establish it for a custom that all his successors on the day of becoming lords of Jessulmer should in like manner wear the *jogi's* dress. Then the holy man vanished, to be seen no more of Deoraj; and from that time each sovereign prince of Jessulmer

bore the title of Rawul, and put on the yellow robe for the day of his enthronement.

For the next three centuries there is little to note about his successors, except that in the twelfth century one of them, Jesul, was guided by a Brahmin hermit to a spring of water, by the side of which he built Jessulmer, the city from which the principality thereafter took its name. After him the Rawuls again are for the most part vague and shadowy figures. One of Jesul's successors, Lakhun Sen, became proverbial in the country as an absolute fool. It was he who was annoyed by the nightly howling of the jackals, and asked why the creatures made that noise. "It is because of the cold," explained the attendants. "Then order the tailor to make them all warm quilted dresses," said Lakhun Sen.

This was done, but still the howling continued, and the Rawul's heart was grieved. Why could not the jackals be satisfied? Then he made up his mind that they were restless because they had no shelter, and he ordered little houses to be built for them in his preserves—whereof many remained, even in Tod's days. All power was in the hands of his clever wife, a princess of Amerkote, and dearly did she pay for it; when her brothers came to Jessulmer on a friendly visit, the Rawul had them all assassinated, and following the usual methods in such cases ordered the bodies to be flung over the wall.

Of a different type was his uncle, Jaetsi, who succeeded to the throne when Lakhun's son had

been tried and found wanting. Jaetsi was a practised warrior, the sire and grandsire of heroes. His two sons, Moolraj and Ruttunsi, trained their sons to be men of war, and well it was for them that they knew how to wield arms, for they were called to grapple with a terrible foe.

Ala-ad-din Khalji, the great Muslim conqueror, swept down upon Hindustan, slaying and spoiling wheresoever he went. The story of his sack of Chitor has been told already ; other Rajput states also suffered, and it must be owned that the men of Jessulmer hastened their own doom if they did not actually bring it upon themselves.

News reached the sons of Rawul Jaetsi that a caravan of fifteen hundred horses and fifteen hundred mules, laden with treasure, was on its way to Ala-ad-din at Delhi—the annual tribute from Multan. Forthwith they disguised themselves as grain merchants, and taking seven thousand horses and twelve hundred camels, camped upon the banks of a river, where the caravan had halted. In the night the princes and their men arose and fell upon the armed escort, plundered the caravan, and bore off the spoil to Jessulmer.

The old Rawul knew the danger that his hot-headed sons had brought upon the land, and knew that when the few stragglers who had escaped from the escort told their tale at Delhi, their master would not be slow to act. Jessulmer was filled with provisions, and all the surrounding country for many miles was laid bare, and the towns deserted. Great stones were piled on the ramparts

of the fortresses, to be cast down on the heads of the enemy when they should attempt a storm. All preparations being made, the Rawul sent away the old, the crippled, and all who could take no part in the defence, together with his young granddaughters, to a safe place in the heart of the desert. His grandsons and his two elder sons were with him in the fortress. His younger sons remained outside with an armed force to harass the enemy in the field.

Ala-ad-din sent Nawab Maboob Khan, one of his chief generals, in command of a steel-clad host that "rolled on like the clouds in Bhadoon."[1] But Rawul Jaetsi knew how to make the best use of his little force. The fifty-six bastions of Jessulmer were manned by three thousand seven hundred warriors, and two thousand remained in reserve, as a support in time of need. A week passed by, and seven thousand of the besiegers had been slain. For two years it would have been hard to tell which were besiegers and which besieged. The Bhattis lay entrenched behind the walls of Jessulmer, sheltered from the heat and the rain and from their enemies, and fared well, drawing provisions from neighbouring towns. The Muslims could not stir beyond their camp, for fear of Jaetsi's sons, who cut off their supplies and harassed them continually.

During a siege the time drags wearily for either side. Ruttunsi, Jaetsi's son, contrived to strike up a friendship with Maboob Khan, and it was

[1] Bhadoon = the month of rain.

discovered to the delight of both that each was an ardent chess-player. Every day at an appointed hour the prince would come from the fortress and the Nawab from the camp. Their attendants would set the chess-board under a spreading tree between the outposts of the two forces, and they would play a game of chess together in perfect goodwill.

This idyllic life had lasted for eight years, when Rawul Jaetsi died, and was succeeded by his eldest son Moolraj. Coming to play his usual game of chess, the Nawab noticed the signs of rejoicing, and asked the cause. It was explained to him that at that hour Moolraj was being seated on his father's throne. The Nawab offered all good wishes, and then lamented that this must be the last of their happy meetings under the tree. Ala-ad-din suspected him of being too well affected to his enemies, and had sent commands that they should play chess no more. He must bid farewell to his friend Ruttunsi; they would see each other again on the morrow, when he intended to make a general assault upon the fortress.

Next morning, accordingly, the Nawab and all his meinie set themselves in battle array. The Bhattis, having been forewarned, were quite ready for them; and after an enjoyable day the troops of Delhi were obliged to go back into camp, having lost nine thousand men.

So the year dragged on to its close, when the Sultan's troops had been reinforced, and the ranks of the besieged were thinned, and their stores dwindling fast. Then Moolraj called his kinsfolk

about him, and spoke: "For nine years we have defended our dwellings, but our supplies are all consumed, and no more can reach us. What is to be done?" The chiefs answered that nothing more remained but to sacrifice their lives and the lives of their women, as became Rajputs in the last extremity.

However, next morning, they found the enemy's camp deserted. Ala-ad-din had grown weary of keeping so large a force beyond his borders to no purpose, and had recalled them. Reprieved from death, great was the exultation of all in Jessulmer; and no one noticed that in the general excitement a younger brother of the Nawab, whom they had captured in the Muslim camp, succeeded in making his escape.

In a few days the sentinels on the ramparts saw the horizon again grow dark with the hosts of the Muslim; the Nawab had learned from his brother how sorely pressed were the garrison of Jessulmer, and turned back to finish his work.

"This comes of your friendship with the Toork!" cried Moolraj to Ruttunsi; "had we slain the prisoner he had never carried tales to his brother. And what shall be done now?" "There is but one path open," answered Ruttunsi. "Let the women ascend the pyre, destroy by fire or by water all that can be destroyed, and then fling wide the gates, to hew our way to heaven, sword in hand."

The chiefs were again called together, and one and all approved the words of Ruttunsi. "Be it

so," cried Moolraj, as he stood above them, "you are of a warlike race, and strong are your arms in the cause of your prince. What heroes excel you who thus tread in the warrior's path? In battle not even the elephant could stand against you. For the maintenance of my honour the sword is in your hands; let Jessulmer be illumined by its blows upon the foe."

From the council of the warriors the royal brothers went to the palace of the Ranis and told them what had been ordained. With radiant face one of the Ranis replied, "This night we shall prepare, and by the morning's light we shall dwell in heaven;" and thus it was with the chiefs and all their wives.

Ruttunsi's only care was for his two sons, Gursi and Kanur, and he sent a last message to the Nawab, entreating that they might be spared, since the elder was no more than twelve years old. The Nawab sent back two confidential servants, with instructions to bring away the lads, whom he bound himself by oath to protect. Ruttunsi embraced his sons for the last time, then gave them into the charge of the Nawab's men, who took them to Maboob's tent. The Muslim general welcomed the sons of his foeman, placed his hand on their heads as a sign that they were under his protection, and comforted their grief for the father whom he too knew and loved. Then he sent for two Brahmins, and bade them feed, teach, and care for the lads, as beseemed their race and their degree.

That last night was spent together by all who were left in Jessulmer. When morning dawned the prayers were said, the solemn ablutions were performed, and the women to the number of twenty-four thousand were assembled. All were there, from the girl unwed to the mother of ten sons, from the babe at the breast to the woman of forty. Some died by the sword, some threw themselves into the flames, with all of value that Jessulmer held; not one lived to be the spoil of the conqueror.

The men watched the flames mounting above the palace walls, knowing that the hour was at hand when they would join their brides. They armed themselves, threw the saffron robe over their harness, fastened a sprig of the sacred basil plant in their helmets, and twined the bridal coronet around their brows. Three thousand eight hundred men, the survivors of the nine years' siege, embraced each other for the last time. Open burst the gates of Jessulmer, and the last fight began. "Ruttunsi was lost in the sea of battle; but a hundred and twenty Meers fell before his sword ere he lay in the field. Moolraj plied his lance on the bodies of the barbarians; the field swam in blood. The unclean spirits were gorged with slaughter."

At the end of the day the Nawab had the bodies of Moolraj and Ruttunsi borne into the castle and burned with all respect and solemnity. Ruttunsi's sons were protected by him and by his family after his death until they were old enough to take

care of themselves. Gursi rendered such good service to the Sultan of Delhi in a Moghul invasion that he was restored to his hereditary dominions, with leave to rebuild Jessulmer, which had been dismantled by Maboob's army after the siege. He was childless, and on his death the throne passed to his cousin, the grandson of Rawul Moolraj.

SOME CHIEFTAINS OF JESSULMER

At the beginning of the fifteenth century, some of the chieftains of Jessulmer were involved in a blood feud which had a romantic beginning and a tragic ending.

One of the vassals of Jessulmer was Raningdeo, Rao of Poogul, whose son Sadoo was famed through the length and breadth of Rajast'han for his daring forays. Whoever might be said to rule the Indian desert by right of inheritance, he was known to be its lord by right of mastery, and from Nagore in the east, where Chonda the Rahtore now governed, to the valley of the Indus in the west, all trembled at his coming. Not even his contemporary, Hurba Sankla,[1] whose name is still renowned, was as skilful as Sadoo in carrying off what did not belong to him.

It chanced one day that Sadoo was returning from one of his expeditions, and passed the castle of Manik Rao, the head of the Mohil clan. The Rao came out and invited him to rest and eat. Sadoo carelessly accepted the invitation, and entered the castle with his men. All were eager

[1] For Hurba Sankla see "The Story of Prince Chonda."

to see the daring reiver who overawed the whole country-side ; and Sadoo, as he ate by the side of the Rao, had to face the gaze of many pairs of eyes.

When the meal was over, Manik was told that his daughter Korumdevi wished to speak with him at once. The Rao must have cursed his hospitable impulse as soon as he entered the women's apartments; Korumdevi, like every one else in the castle, had been overcome with desire to see Sadoo, and she had been staring at him all the evening from behind the shelter of a screen. The result of this was that she had fallen in love with him, and she vowed to her father that unless she could be Sadoo's wife, she would wed no man.

Vainly did the distracted father urge that she was already promised in marriage to Irrinkowal the Rahtore, son of Chonda, and heir to Mundore and Nagore. Korumdevi cared nothing for the promise, or for the almost inevitable consequences to all concerned if Chonda were affronted. Sadoo was the lord of the desert, the greatest freebooter in the land, and she would have him whatever might befall.

In sore perplexity Rao Manik went back to his guest, and told him of Korumdevi's vow—hoping, perhaps, that a tried warrior might not be inclined to lose his life for the sake of a love-sick girl. But Sadoo would not depart one inch from the Rajput code of honour which ordained that such proposals coming from a lady could not be refused. Vainly did Manik strive to dissuade him. "If the

cocoanut is sent to Poogul," Sadoo maintained, "honour forbids me to return it."

Manik—who seems to have been of an unusually peaceable disposition for one of his race—could not stand out against his headstrong daughter. The cocoanut was sent to Poogul with all due ceremony; and at the proper time Sadoo came back to her father's castle to wed Korumdevi.

Irrinkowal, the defrauded lover, was no "poor craven bridegroom" to stand by, inactive, while a reiver carried off his bride. The insult must be avenged in blood, and he gathered clansmen and friends to his aid. Four thousand Rahtores followed him, with a contingent of the Sanklas, under their chief Mehraj. Mehraj had a grievance of his own to redress, Sadoo having killed one of his sons.

When the wedding was over, Manik and his sons entreated Sadoo to take an escort of their clansmen to guard Korumdevi and her dowry—her thirteen beautiful female servants, her gold and silver vessels, and her golden bedsteads. Let him say the word and four thousand Mohils should ride back with him to Poogul. Sadoo laughed them to scorn; seven hundred Bhattis had come with him to fetch the bride, and seven hundred Bhattis were quite capable of bringing her home. Only after great persuasion would he allow one of his brothers-in-law and fifty men to go with him.

They journeyed in safety as far as a place called

Chondun, and there the whole party halted for food and rest.

One of Sadoo's kinsmen, a sturdy warrior named Jeytanga, had stretched himself out to sleep at some distance from the main body of the escort. He lay down upon his saddlecloth, and twisted round his arm the bridle of his horse—a chestnut with four white legs and a white star on its brow. While its master slept, the chestnut kept watch, and took note of a large body of armed men in the distance who were not Bhattis or Mohils. "Be still, Whitelegs," murmured Jeytanga, drowsily, as the chestnut began to trample gently upon him. "Let me sleep, I say"—but Whitelegs only trod the harder, and Jeytanga, realising that danger was at hand, sprang to his feet, to find a Rahtore standing by his side, and a hostile force confronting him. Mehraj had often met Jeytanga on the field, and had pointed him out to Irrinkowal, who had sent this messenger to wake him and challenge him to single combat with one of their band.

Jeytanga, in no way taken aback by this surprise, declared that he would be delighted to oblige any Rahtore or Sankla among them, but that he was not ready to begin at once; most unfortunately he had lost his supply of opium and missed his usual dose. Could Mehraj or Irrinkowal let him have some from their store? The messenger brought back the drug, Jeytanga took what he wanted, and lay down to sleep again. When he awoke, he put on his armour, and saddled White-

legs. "Thou and I have seen many a raid and many a fray, my comrade; carry me well in this hour." Whitelegs responded to the call; together horse and man bore down a gigantic warrior who spurred out to meet them from the ranks of Irrinkowal's force. Then, mad with the blood-rage, Jeytanga stormed into the midst of the enemy, crossing steel with all whom he thought his peers.

Irrinkowal and Mehraj would take no advantage of their greater strength in numbers. Warrior was sent to meet warrior in single combat, or equal bodies of picked men from either side encountered, while the cause of all the strife watched from between the curtains of her litter. Six hundred Rahtores, and nearly half of the bridal escort, had fallen when Sadoo mounted his steed and rode forth. Twice he charged into the enemy's ranks, bearing death with him, and twice he came back to be praised by Korumdevi. But the end was drawing near, and bride and bride-groom clasped each other in a last embrace. "I will watch thy deeds," promised Korumdevi, "and if thou comest not back to me, I will follow thee, even unto death."

Sadoo took no account of any save of his rival, Irrinkowal, who, for his part, had been waiting to meet him. There was the usual courteous dispute over striking the first blow, and then the two swords flashed in the air. Sadoo struck first, and caught Irrinkowal upon the shoulders; the Rahtore staggered, but returned the blow upon Sadoo's

head, and the chieftains fell to the ground, side by side. Irrinkowal, sorely wounded, was borne away by his men ; Sadoo's life had fled beyond recall, and the followers on either side ceased from the battle.

Then Korumdevi, the widow of a day, arose from her litter and bade her attendants raise the pyre for Sadoo where he had fallen. The brushwood was heaped, the oil was poured, and the corpse was laid upon the logs. Korumdevi then called for a sword ; stretching out one arm, she struck it off with the other. "Bear this token to the father of my lord at Poogul ; tell him that such was his daughter." She took the dead man's head in her lap, and lay down to die. "Smite off my other arm on which are my marriage jewels ; let it be given to the bard of my father's house." Thus died Korumdevi.

The feud did not end here, although, as Irrinkowal died of his wounds six months after the battle, the account might have been considered as balanced. The sons had perished, and it was the turn of the fathers.

Old Rao Raningdeo summoned his clansmen, and led them against the Sanklas, who had borne the brunt of the day. Only twenty-five Sanklas out of three hundred and fifty had left the field with their wounded leader, and the clan was in no state to encounter the forces of Poogul. Raningdeo had his fill of slaughter and of spoil, and was going home again, well pleased with his work, when he was intercepted by Irrinkowal's father,

Rao Chonda of Mundore. After a desperate struggle, Raningdeo fell with most of his band, and Chonda went home, well pleased in his turn.

The next move now devolved upon Raningdeo's sons, Tunno and Mairah. Poogul, as they well knew, was no match for Mundore; and so, for the sake of keeping the sacred obligation of maintaining their father's feud, they voluntarily disinherited themselves not only of all property but of everything else that they held dear in their native land. They went to Khizr Khan of Delhi, renounced their faith, and became Muslim proselytes on condition of his giving them a force to revenge their father's death on Chonda.

At this point there came forward another ally—Kailun, the third son of the Rawul of Jessulmer. Poogul being a fief of Jessulmer, his sympathies were entirely with the brothers, and he suggested that to make their victory over Chonda certain, they should use strategy as well as force—that they should try *chul*—a convenient word, which to a Rajput "means indifferently stratagem or treachery." The brothers agreed, and put themselves into Kailun's hands.

Kailun's next proceeding was to write a moving letter to Chonda, deploring the incessant hostilities between Mundore and Jessulmer. Could there not, he said, be peace between them? On either side of the borders the land lay waste; the men who dwelt there divided their time between burning and spoiling the property of their neighbours, or

in watching to preserve their own gear from destruction. He for his part was willing to make the first move; he would give his daughter as a wife to Chonda. Nay more, although custom demanded that the bridegroom should seek the bride at her father's house, lest Chonda should fear to enter Jessulmer, the bride should be sent to Chonda at Nagore.

This was no small condescension from a Rajput chieftain, and Chonda gratefully accepted the proposal. All was made ready for the bride in Nagore, and on the appointed day Chonda and a train of kinsmen rode forth through the city gates to meet the bridal procession. First came a train of horses and loaded camels; then fifty covered chariots, followed by a small armed escort.

Something in the appearance of the train made Chonda uneasy; there was no air of festivity, and those loads on the camels did not look like the bedsteads, the jewels, and the dresses usually sent with a bride. Moreover, why was that body of horsemen hovering at a little distance? He gave the word to his followers, and turned to ride back to Mundore, but it was too late. From the covered chariots leaped the warriors of Poogul, the men who had been leading the horses and camels drew their swords, and rushed forwards. The Muslim horsemen galloped up to the scene, Chonda was intercepted, and fell at the very gates of the city. Through the portals the flying Rahtores rushed intermingled with the Bhattis and the Tatars, and all was confusion.

While the Dellil contingent were happily engaged in plundering the city, it occurred to some of the principal chiefs among the Rahtores and Bhattis that it were pity for the Muslim to carry away the spoils of the Rajput state. The feud was now perfectly adjusted ; a father and a son had perished on either side, all debts were cancelled, and there was no reason why hostilities should continue, since honour was satisfied. In a short time, the contending parties had come to an understanding, and were quite agreed that henceforth they might live in friendship, and that the only enemy on whom both should avenge themselves was the Muslim. Accordingly Rahtores and Bhattis combined to fall upon the men of Delhi, slew every one of them, stripped them of the spoil, and then went their various ways in perfect contentment.

Those who suffered most in the end were the sons of Raningdeo. As self-made outcasts from their faith and their race, they could no longer remain in Poogul. The only person who gained anything substantial by the feud was the astute Kailun, who took possession of their forfeited lands.

Kailun's son and successor, Chachick-deo, was in his way even more remarkable a personage than his father. After a long life spent for the most part in successful raids and descents upon his neighbours, having led his forces in triumph as far as the heart of the Punjab, he was stricken with a terrible disease. Neither medicines nor charms availed to cure him, and the old warrior

knew that he must die. "A bed-death, a straw-death" was as intolerable to him as to any north-land viking, and he vowed that he would die in harness, if he could find any man to meet him. Then came a serious difficulty; so thoroughly had he established his sway in all the neighbouring districts that there was not an enemy within a reasonable distance who would dare to stand against him in fair fight.

One of his most inveterate foes had been an hereditary enemy, Kaloo Shah, the Langa[1] prince of Multan, whom he had twice defeated with heavy loss. To this chief he now sent an embassy, entreating him, by the memory of their former combats, to grant him "the gift of battle," so that he might die by the sword, as became a Rajput, and not by the slow wastings of disease.

Kaloo Shah demurred; Chachick was as well known for what, not to use a harsher term, might be called "generalship," as for valour; might this not be a device to get the better of Multan for a third time?

"On the word of a Rajput," answered the messenger, "Rawul Chachick intends no evil against you. He only asks for an honourable death at your hands, and he will bring no more than five hundred men with him."

All the gentlemanly instincts of the Langa were touched, and he sent back word that he would meet his old foe once again. Chachick imme-

[1] The Langas were an Afghan family who ruled Multan for about a century.

diately attended to all his worldly business, bade farewell to his wives, distributed his property amongst his sons, and set forth with a joyful heart to the appointed place.

As soon as he reached the spot, he learned that the prince of Multan, faithful to his sword, was approaching with his army. "His soul was rejoiced; he performed his ablutions, worshipped the sword and the gods, bestowed charity, and withdrew his thoughts from the world."

For two hours the battle raged, and heavy was the slaughter on either side. Chachick had his wish; "he gained the abode of Indra, who shared his throne with the hero." Kaloo Shah, having done this last service to his foe, marched back to Multan.

Kailun's eldest son, Kumbho, was subject to fits of insanity, and on that account had been passed over in the succession to his father's lands, in favour of his next brother, Birsil. Birsil was at Deorawul, duly undergoing the twelve days' mourning prescribed by custom, when Kumbho rushed into his presence, and swore to take vengeance upon the Langa prince for Chachick's death. No Oriental would dream of contradicting or restraining a madman, who is under the special protection of God, and no one interfered with Kumbho, who left Deorawul on the same day, followed only by a single slave, and rode in the direction taken by the retreating army of Multan.

Kaloo Shah and his army were entrenched within their camp, encircled by a ditch eleven

yards wide, when Kumbho overtook them. In the darkest hour of the night he set his horse at the ditch, and it bore him safely to the other side. In a few moments, he had reached the harem where slept the prince and his women ; and in a few moments more, he leaped back across the ditch to the faithful slave.

Birsil and his brothers were still at Deorawul when once more Kumbho strode into the hall. He was worn and travel-stained, and in his hand he bore a ghastly burden—a human head, which he cast down before them. Well did the Bhattis know those features ; it was the head of Kaloo Shah.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

THIS book has been founded upon Colonel Tod's "Annals and Antiquities of Rajast'han," but the stories have been supplemented from other sources —principally from Stanley Lane Poole's "Mediæval India" ("Story of the Nations" series), Elphinstone's "History of India," Grant Duff's "History of the Mahrattas," Fanshawe's "Delhi, Past and Present," and Forrest's "Cities of India."

As it is intended for the general reader, no apology is offered to scholars and historians for its shortcomings. Something, however, must be said about the spelling of proper nouns. Tod's rendering of the names of persons and places often differs from that now in ordinary use, and he occasionally spells the same name in different ways. Had I adopted the uniform "official" spelling, I should have been obliged in many cases to add a parenthesis with the usual form of the word for the reader's enlightenment. The least objectionable method seemed to be to give the names of well-known persons and places, such as "Udaipur," "Akbar," "Jehangir," in a simple form that was likely to be familiar to the majority of readers; the names of persons and places

which, except for the "Annals," would be unknown to us, I have given as Tod renders them. The glaring inconsistencies resulting from this method will be patent to any one with a tincture of Oriental lore; but it was adopted, with the publishers' approval, in the hope of smoothing the way for those as unlearned as myself.

One slip pointed out by a friendly critic, too late for correction in its proper place, may be noted here. In Sir Edwin Arnold's ballad, the faithful nurse of the little prince does not "die of grief," she deliberately slays herself.

The paragraph of an introduction which an author takes most pleasure in writing, is usually that which acknowledges the help and sympathy given to the work while it was in progress. There are some obligations for which it is possible to express gratitude; I can venture to thank the friend who spent a long afternoon at the India Office in search of information which I knew not how to obtain for myself; I can venture to thank the officials of the London Library for the patience and kindliness which seem to be at the service of all who need their help. But I know not how to thank my father's friend, whose name stands on the title-page, for all he has done to encourage me in my task. There are obligations so heavy that the debtor shrinks from expressing them in words, for fear of seeming presumptuous; and of this nature is my debt to Sir George Birdwood.

In conclusion, I would only beg all who may

take up this book to believe that I had no thought of being "the dwarf on the giant's shoulders." A cabinet stands in the room where many children are playing; one of the children has climbed upon a chair, turned the key in the lock, and brought out a handful of jewels from the cabinet to show to her playfellows. Some of them, caring nothing for the jewels, may leave them untouched upon the floor; others will speedily mount the chair in their turn and make discoveries for themselves. May they be as richly rewarded as was the seeker who now proffers what she has gathered from an inexhaustible store.

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